MODESTE MIGNON
HONORINE
FACINO CANE

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/modestemignonhon0000unse

D. MURRAY SMITH.

MODESTE MIGNON.

H. DE BALZAC

MODESTE MIGNON

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY

AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED BY

CLARA BELL and JAMES WARING

WITH PREFACES BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

PHILADELPHIA

THE GEBBIE PUBLISHING CO., Ltd.

1899

1962

72530

CONTENTS

VOLUME I.

	PAGE
PREFACE	ix
MODESTE MIGNON	1
HONORINE	288
FACINO CANE	375

VOLUME II.

PREFACE	ix
THE LILY OF THE VALLEY	1
ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN	304
THE GREAT BRETÊCHE	347
A MAN OF BUSINESS	371

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME I.

MODESTE MIGNON . . . . . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

"DUMAY, GUARD MY LAST CHILD AS A BULL-DOG MIGHT" . 24

"I WILL NEVER MARRY WITHOUT MY FATHER'S CONSENT" . 100

"YOU WILL MAKE ME DRUNK," SAID THE CLERK . . . 233

"I AM CONQUERED," SAID SHE 367
Drawn by D. Murray-Smith.

VOLUME II.

HE STARTED UP, THREW THE TABLE OVER ME AND THE LAMP ON THE GROUND 67

I RAISED THE POOR WOMAN IN MY ARMS 122

MADELEINE, JACQUES, AND THE ABBÉ DE DOMINIS ALL KNEELING AT THE FOOT OF A WOODEN CROSS 263

"WHEN ARE YOU TO MARRY THE DUKE?" 317
Drawn by D. Murray-Smith.

Mignon's mouth a vindication of the French process of tying a girl hand and foot and handing her over to the best bidder as a husband, instead of allowing her to choose for herself, Modeste's audacity in pursuing the opposite method is crowned with complete success, if not with success of exactly the kind that she anticipated. Except the case of Savinien de Portenduère and Ursule Mirouët, hers is, so far as I can remember, the only example in the whole "Comédie" of a love-marriage which, as we are told, was wholly successful, without even vacillations on the wife's part or relapses on the husband's. It is true that, with a slight touch of cowardice or concession, Balzac has made Modeste half a German; but this is a very venial bowing in the porch, not the chancel, of the House of Rimmon.

Whether the young lady is as entirely successful and as entirely charming as she is undeniably audacious in conception, is not a point for equally positive pronouncement. Just as it was probably necessary for Balzac, in order not to outrage the feelings of his readers too much, to put that Teutonic strain in Modeste, so he had, in all probability, to exhibit her as capricious and almost unamiable, in order to attain the fitness of things in connection with so terrible a young person. It is certain that even those who by no means rejoice in pattern heroines, even those who "like them rather wicked," may sometimes think Modeste nasty in her behavior to her family, to Butscha, and, perhaps, to her future husband. She is, for instance, quite wrong about the whip, which she might have refused altogether, but could not with decency accept from one person and refuse from another. But what has just been said will cover this and other petulances and outbursts. So "shoking" a young person (it is very cheerful and interesting to think how much more exactly that favorite *vox nihili* of French speech expresses French than English sentiment) could not but behave "shokingly."

Most of the minor characters are good: Butscha, a difficult

and, in any case, slightly improbable personage, is, in his own way, very good, indeed. It was probably necessary for Balzac, in turning the usual scheme of the French novel upside down, to provide a rather timid hero for such a masterful heroine; and it must be admitted that Ernest de la Brière is a rather preternaturally good young man. Still, he is not mawkish; and except that he should not have given Modeste quite such a valuable present, he behaves more like a gentleman in the full English sense than any other of Balzac's heroes.

The very full, very elaborate, and very unfavorable portrait of Canalis offers again much scope for difference of mere taste and opinion, without the possibility of laying down a conclusion very positively. Even if tradition were not unanimous on the subject, it would be quite certain that Canalis is a direct presentment of Lamartine, from whom he is so ostentatiously dissociated. And there can, of course, be no two opinions as to the presentment being very distinctly unfavorable—much more so than the earlier introductions of this same Canalis, which are either complimentary or colorless for the most part, though his vanity is sometimes hinted at. I do not know whether Balzac had any private quarrel with the poet, or whether Lamartine's increasing leanings toward republicanism exasperated the always monarchical novelist. But it is certain that Canalis cuts rather a bad figure here—that Lamartine was actually supposed to have married for money—and that the whole thing has more of the nature of a personal attack than anything else in Balzac, except the outbreak against Sainte-Beuve in "Un Prince de la Bohème."

Perhaps it should be added that the practice of correspondence between incognitas and men of letters, not unknown in any country, has been rather frequent and famous in France. The chief example is, of course, that interchange of communications between Mérimée and Mlle. Jenny Dacquin, which had such important results for literature, and such not unimportant ones for the parties concerned. Balzac himself

notary or law-student ought to keep handy for other people's secrets. After paying your respects, homage, and devoir to Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, to Monsieur and Madame Dumay, and to Monsieur Gobenheim, if he is at the chalet, when silence is restored, Monsieur Dumay will take you aside; look attentively—I allow you—at Mademoiselle Modeste all the time he is talking to you. My worthy friend will ask you to go out for a walk and return in about an hour, at about nine o'clock, with a hurried air; try to seem quite out of breath, then whisper in his ear, but loud enough for Mademoiselle Modeste to hear: 'The young man is coming!'"

Exupère was to start for Paris on the following day to begin his law studies. It was this prospect of departure which had led Latournelle to propose to his friend Dumay that his son should play the assistant in the important conspiracy which may be suspected from his instructions.

"Is Mademoiselle Modeste suspected of carrying on an intrigue?" asked Butscha timidly of his mistress.

"Hsh—Butscha!" replied Madame Latournelle, taking her husband's arm.

Madame Latournelle, the daughter of the registrar of the lower court, considers herself justified by her birth in describing her family as parliamentary. These pretensions account for the efforts made by the lady, whose face is rather too red and rough, to assume the majesty of the tribunal whose verdicts are recorded by her father. She takes snuff, holds herself as stiff as a post, gives herself airs of importance, and looks exactly like a mummy that has been galvanized into life for a moment. She tries to give her sharp voice an aristocratic tone, but she no more succeeds in that than in concealing her defective education. Her social value is indisputable when you look at the caps she wears, bristling with flowers, the false fronts plastered on her temples, and the gowns she chooses. How could the stores get rid of such goods if it were not for such as Madame Latournelle?

This worthy woman's absurdities might have passed almost unremarked, for she was essentially charitable and pious, but that nature, which sometimes has its little jest by turning out these grotesque creations, gave her the figure of a drum-major so as to display the devices of her provincial mind. She has never been out of le Havre, she believes in the infallibility of le Havre, she buys everything at le Havre, and gets her dresses there; she speaks of herself as Norman to the finger-tips; she reverences her father and adores her husband. Little Latournelle was bold enough to marry this woman when she had attained the post-matrimonial age of thirty-three, and they contrived to have a son. As he might anywhere have won the sixty thousand francs which the registrar had to settle, his unusual courage was set down to a wish to avoid the irruption of the Minotaur, against which his personal attractions would hardly have guaranteed him if he had been so rash as to set his house on fire by bringing home a pretty, young wife. The notary had, in fact, simply discerned the good qualities of Mademoiselle Agnès—her name was Agnès—and remarked how soon a wife's beauty is a thing of the past to her husband. As to the insignificant youth to whom the registrar gave his Norman name at the font, Madame Latournelle was so much astonished to find herself a mother at the age of thirty-five years and seven months, that she would even now find milk to suckle him withal if he needed it—the only hyperbole which can give a notion of her maternal mania.

"How handsome my boy is!" she would say to her little friend Modeste Mignon, without any ulterior motive, as she looked at him on their way to church, her beautiful Exupère leading the way.

"He is like you," Modeste Mignon would reply, as she might have said, "What bad weather!"

This sketch of the woman, a mere accessory figure, seems necessary when it is said that Madame Latournelle had for three years past been the chaperon of the young girl for whom

the notary and his friend Dumay were laying one of those snares which, in the "Physiologie du Mariage," I have called mouse-traps.

As for Latournelle, imagine a good little man, as wily as the purest honesty will allow, but whom every stranger would take for a rogue at first sight of the singular face, to which every one at le Havre is accustomed. Weak eyes, always red, compel the worthy lawyer to wear green spectacles to protect them. Each eyebrow, thinly marked with down, projects about a line beyond the brown tortoise-shell rim of the glasses, thus making a sort of double arch. If you never happen to have noticed in some passer-by the effect of these two semicircles, one above the other and divided by a hollow, you cannot conceive how puzzling such a face may be; especially when this face is pale and haggard, and ends in a point like that of Mephistopheles, which painters have taken from the cat, and this is what Babylas Latournelle is like. Above those vile green spectacles rises a bald skull, with a wig all the more obviously artificial because it seems endowed with motion and is so indiscreet as to show a few white hairs straggling below it all around, while it never sits straight on the forehead. As we look at this estimable Norman, dressed in black like a beetle, on two legs like pins, and know him to be the most honest soul living, we wonder, but cannot discover, what is the reason of such contradictory physiognomies.

Jean Butscha, a poor, abandoned foundling, of whom the Registrar Labrosse and his daughter had taken charge, had risen to be head clerk by sheer hard work, and was lodged and fed by his master, who gave him nine hundred francs a year. With no appearance of youth and almost a dwarf, he had made Modeste his idol; he would have given his life for her. This poor creature, his eyes, like two slow matches under thickened eyelids, marked by the smallpox, crushed by a mass of woolly hair, encumbered by his huge hands, had lived under the gaze of pity from the age of seven. Is not this enough to account

for him in every way? Silent, reserved, exemplary in his conduct, and religious, he wandered through the vast expanse marked on the map of the realm of Love, as Love without Hope, the barren and sublime wilderness of Longing. Modeste had nicknamed this grotesque clerk "The Mysterious Dwarf." This led Butscha to read Walter Scott's romance, and he said to Modeste—

"Would you like to have a rose from your Mysterious Dwarf in case of danger?"

Modeste hurled the soul of her adorer down into its mud hovel again by one of the terrible looks which young women fling at men whom they do not like. Butscha had called himself *le clerc obscure* (the obscure clerk), not knowing that the pun dated back to the origin of coats-of-arms; but he, like his master's wife, had never been away from le Havre.

It is perhaps necessary, for the benefit of those who do not know that town, to give a word of explanation as to whither the Latournelle family was bound, the head clerk evidently being included. Ingouville is to le Havre what Montmartre is to Paris, a high hill with the town spread at its foot; with this difference, however—that the sea and the Seine surround the town and the hill; that le Havre is permanently limited by enclosing fortifications; and, finally, that the mouth of the river, the port and the docks, form a scene quite unlike that offered by the fifty thousand houses of Paris.

At the foot of Montmartre an ocean of slates displays its rigid blue waves; at Ingouville you look down on what might be moving roofs stirred by the wind. This high ground, which, from Rouen to the sea, follows the course of the river, leaving a wider or narrower margin between itself and the water, contains treasures of picturesque beauty with its towns, its ravines, its valleys, and its meadows, and rose to immense value at Ingouville after 1818, from which year dates the prosperity of le Havre. This hamlet became the Auteuil, the Ville-d'Avray, the Montmorency of the merchants, who built

themseleves terraced villas on this amphitheatre, to breathe the sea-air sweetened by the flowers of their magnificent gardens. These bold speculators rest there from the fatigues of the counting-house and the atmosphere of the closely packed houses, with no space between them—often not even a courtyard, the inevitable result of the growth of the population, the unyielding belt of the ramparts and the expansion of the docks.

And, indeed, how dreary is the heart of the town, how glad is Ingouville! The law of social development has made the suburb of Graville sprout into life like a mushroom; it is larger now than le Havre itself, clinging to the foot of the slope like a serpent. Ingouville, on the ridge, has but one street; and, as in all such places, the houses looking over the Seine have an immense advantage over those on the opposite side of the road, from which the view is shut out, though they stand like spectators, on tiptoe, to peep over the roofs. Here, however, as everywhere else, compromises have been exacted. Some of the houses perched on the top occupy a superior position, or enjoy a right of view which compels their neighbor to keep his buildings below a certain height. Then the broken rocky soil has cuttings here and there for roads leading up to the amphitheatre, and through these dips some of the plots get a glimpse of the town, the river, or the sea. Though it is not precipitous, the high ground ends rather suddenly in a cliff; from the top of the street, which zigzags up the steep slope, coombes are visible where villages are planted: Saint-Adresse, two or three Saints-who-knows-who, and coves where the sea roars. This side of Ingouville, almost deserted, is in striking contrast to the handsome villas that overlook the Seine valley. Are the gales a foe to vegetation? Do the merchants shrink from the expense of gardening on so steep a slope? Be this as it may, the traveler by steamboat is startled at finding the coast so bare and rugged to the west of Ingouville—a beggar in rags next to a rich man sumptuously clothed and perfumed.

In 1829, one of the last houses toward the sea—now, no doubt, in the middle of Ingouville—was called, perhaps is still called, the chalet. It had been originally a gatekeeper's lodge, with a plot of garden in front. The owner of the villa to which it belonged—a house with a paddock, gardens, an aviary, hot-houses, and meadows—had a fancy to bring this lodge into harmony with the splendor of his residence, and had it rebuilt in the style of an English cottage. He divided it by a low wall from his lawn, graced with flowers, borders and the terrace of the villa, and planted a hedge close to the wall to screen it. Behind this cottage, called the chalet in spite of all he could do, lie the kitchen-garden and orchards. This chalet—a chalet without cows or dairy—has no fence from the road but a paling, of which the wood has become invisible under a luxuriant hedge.

Now, on the other side of the road, the opposite house has a similar paling and hedge. Being built under special conditions it allows the town to be seen from the chalet.

This little house was the despair of Monsieur Vilquin, the owner of the villa. And this is why: The creator of this residence, where every detail loudly proclaimed, "Here millions are displayed!" had extended his grounds into the country solely, as he said, not to have his gardeners in his pocket. As soon as it was finished, the chalet could only be inhabited by a friend.

Monsieur Mignon, the first owner, was greatly attached to his cashier, and this story will prove that Dumay fully returned the feeling; he therefore offered him this little home. Dumay, a stickler for formalities, made his master sign a lease for twelve years at three hundred francs a year; and Monsieur Mignon signed it willingly, saying, "Consider, my dear Dumay, you are binding yourself to live with me for twelve years."

In consequence of events to be here related, the estates of Monsieur Mignon, formerly the richest merchant in le Havre,

were sold to Vilquin, one of his opponents on 'Change. In his delight at taking possession of the famous Villa Mignon, the purchaser forgot to ask for this lease to be canceled. Dumay, not to hinder the sale, would at that time have signed anything Vilquin might have required; but when once the sale was completed, he stuck to his lease as to a revenge. He stayed in Vilquin's pocket, in the heart of the Vilquin family, watching Vilquin, annoying Vilquin; in short, Vilquin's gad-fly. Every morning, at his window, Vilquin felt a surge of violent vexation as he saw this gem of domestic architecture, this chalet which had cost sixty thousand francs, and which blazed like a ruby in the sunshine.

An almost exact comparison! The architect had built the cottage of the finest red-bricks, pointed with white. The window-frames are painted bright green and the timbers a yellow-brown. The roof projects several feet. A pretty fret-work balcony adorns the first floor, and a verandah stands out like a glass cage from the middle of the front. The first floor consists of a pretty drawing-room and a dining-room divided by the bottom landing of the stairs, which are of wood designed and decorated with elegant simplicity. The kitchen is at the back of the dining-room, and behind the drawing-room is a small room which, at this time, was used by Monsieur and Madame Dumay as their bedroom. On the second floor the architect has planned two large bedrooms, each with a dressing-room, the verandah serving as a sitting-room; and above these, in the roof, which looks like two cards leaning against each other, are two servants' rooms, attics, each with a dormer window, but fairly spacious.

Vilquin had the meanness to build a wall on the side next the kitchen-garden and orchard. Since this act of vengeance, the few square yards secured to the chalet by the lease are like a Paris garden. The outbuildings, constructed and painted to match the chalet, back against the neighboring grounds.

The interior of this pleasant residence harmonizes with the

exterior. The drawing-room, floored with polished iron-wood, is decorated with a marvelous imitation of Chinese lacquer. Myriad-colored birds and impossible green foliage, in fantastic Chinese drawing, stand out against a black background, in panels with gilt frames. The dining-room is completely fitted with pine-wood carved and fretted, as in the high-class peasants' houses in Russia. The little anteroom, formed by the landing, and the staircase are painted like old oak, to represent Gothic decoration. The bedrooms, hung with chintz, are attractive by their costly simplicity. That in which the cashier and his wife slept is wainscoted, like the cabin of a steamship. These shipowners' vagaries account for Vilquin's fury. This ill-starred purchaser wanted to lodge his son-in-law and his daughter in the cottage. This plan, being known to Dumay, may subsequently explain his Breton obstinacy.

The entrance to the chalet is through a trellised iron gate, with lance-heads, standing some inches above the paling and the hedge. The little garden, of the same width as the pompous lawn beyond, was just now full of flowers—roses, dahlias, and the choicest and rarest products of the hot-house flora; for another subject of grievance to Vilquin was that the pretty little hot-house, madame's hot-house as it was called, belongs to the chalet, and divides the chalet from the villa—or connects them, if you like to say so. Dumay indemnified himself for the cares of his place by caring for the conservatory, and its exotic blossoms were one of Modeste's chief pleasures. The billiard-room of Vilquin's villa, a sort of passage-room, was formerly connected with this conservatory by a large turret-shaped aviary, but after the wall was built, which blocked out the view of the orchard, Dumay bricked up the door.

"Wall for wall!" said he.

"You and Dumay have both gone to the wall!" Vilquin's acquaintances on 'Change threw in his teeth; and every day the envied speculator was hailed with some new jest.

In 1827 Vilquin offered Dumay six thousand francs a year and ten thousand francs in compensation if he would cancel the lease; the cashier refused, though he had but a thousand crowns laid by with Gobenheim, a former clerk of his master's. Dumay is indeed a Breton whom fate has planted out in Normandy. Imagine the hatred for his tenants worked up in Vilquin, a Norman with a fortune of three million francs. What high treason to wealth to dare prove to the rich the impotence of gold! Vilquin, whose desperation made him the talk of le Havre, had first offered Dumay the absolute freehold of another pretty house, but Dumay again refused. The town was beginning to wonder at this obstinacy, though many found a reason for it in the statement, "Dumay is a Breton."

In fact, the cashier thought that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon would be too uncomfortable anywhere else. His two idols dwelt here in a temple worthy of them, and at least had the benefit of this sumptuous cottage, where a dethroned king might have kept up the majesty of his surroundings, a kind of decorum which is often lacking to those who have fallen. The reader will not be sorry perhaps to have made acquaintance with Modeste's home and habitual companions; for, at her age, persons and things influence the future as much as character does, if, indeed, the character does not derive from them certain ineffaceable impressions.

By the Latournelles' manner as they went into the chalet, a stranger might have guessed that they came there every evening.

"Already here, sir?" said the notary, on finding in the drawing-room a young banker of the town, Gobenheim, a relation of Gobenheim-Keller, the head of the great Paris house. This young fellow, who was lividly pale—one of those fair men with black eyes, in whose fixed gaze there is something fascinating—who was as sober in speech as in habits, dressed in black, strongly built, though as thin as a

consumptive patient, was a constant visitor to his former master's family and the cashier's house, far less from affection than from interest; whist was played there at two sous a point, and evening dress was not insisted on; he took nothing but a few glasses of *eau sucrée*, and need offer no civilities in return. By his apparent devotion to the Mignons he got credit for a good heart; and it excused him from going into society in le Havre, from useless expenditure, and disturbing the arrangements of his domestic life. This youthful devotee of the golden calf went to bed every evening at half-past ten, and rose at five in the morning. Also, being certain of secrecy in Latournelle and Butscha, Gobenheim could analyze in their presence various knotty questions, benefit by the notary's gratuitous advice and reduce the gossip on 'Change to its true value. This sucking gold-eater (*Gobe-or*, a witticism of Butscha's) was of the nature of the substances known to chemistry as absorbents. Ever since disaster had overwhelmed the house of Mignon, to which he had been apprenticed by the Kellers to learn the higher branches of maritime trade, no one at the chalet had ever asked him to do a single thing, not even a simple commission; his answer was known beforehand. This youth looked at Modeste as he might have examined a penny lithograph.

"He is one of the pistons of the huge machine called trade," said poor Butscha, whose wit betrayed itself by little ironies, timidly uttered.

The four Latournelles greeted, with the utmost deference, an old lady dressed in black, who did not rise from the armchair in which she sat, for both her eyes were covered with the yellow film produced by cataract. Madame Mignon may be painted in a sentence. She attracted attention at once by the august expression of those mothers whose blameless life is a challenge to the strokes of fate, though fate has taken them as a mark for its shafts, who form the larger class of Niobes. Her white wig, well curled and well put on, became her cold

white face, like those of the burgomasters' wives painted by Mirevelt. The extreme neatness of her dress—velvet shoes, a lace collar, a shawl put on straight—bore witness to Modeste's tender care for her mother.

When a minute's silence—as predicted by the notary—reigned in the pretty room, Modeste, seated by her mother, for whom she was embroidering a kerchief, was for a moment the centre of all eyes. This inquisitiveness, concealed under the commonplace questions always asked by callers, even those who meet every day, might have betrayed the little domestic plot against the girl, even to an indifferent person; but Gobenheim, more than indifferent, noticed nothing; he lighted the candles on the card-table. Dumay's attitude made the situation a terrible one for Butscha, for the Latournelles, and, above all, for Madame Dumay, who knew that her husband was capable of shooting Modeste's lover as if he were a mad dog. After dinner, the cashier had gone out for a walk, taking with him two magnificent Pyrenean dogs, whom he suspected of treason, and, had therefore, left with a farmer, formerly a tenant of Monsieur Mignon's; then, a few minutes before the Latournelles had come in, he had brought his pistols from their place by his bed, and had laid them on the chimney-shelf, without letting Modeste see it. The young girl paid no attention to all these arrangements—strange, to say the least of it.

Though short, thick-set, and battered, with a low voice, and an air of listening to his own words, this Breton, formerly a lieutenant in the Guard, has determination and presence of mind so plainly stamped on his features that, in twenty years, no man in the army had ever tried to make game of him. His eyes, small and calmly blue, are like two specks of steel. His manners, the expression of his face, his mode of speech, his gait, all suit his short name of Dumay. His strength, which is well known, secures him against any offense. He can kill a man with a blow of his fist; and, in

fact, achieved this doughty deed at Botzen, where he found himself in the rear of his company, without any weapon, and face to face with a Saxon.

At this moment, the man's set but gentle countenance was sublimely tragical; his lips, as pale as his face, betrayed convulsive fury subdued by Breton determination; his brow was damp with slight perspiration, visible to all, and understood to be a cold moisture. The notary knew that the upshot of all this might be a scene in an assize court. In fact, the cashier was playing a game for Modeste's sake, where honor, fidelity, and feelings of far more importance than any social ties, were at stake; and it was the outcome of one of those compacts of which, in the event of fatal issues, none but God can be the judge. Most dramas lie in the ideas we form of things. The events which seem to us dramatic are only such as our soul turns to tragedy or comedy, as our own nature tends.

Madame Latournelle and Madame Dumay, charmed with keeping watch over Modeste, both had an indescribable artificial manner, a quaver in their voice, which the object of their suspicions did not notice, she seemed so much absorbed by her work. Modeste laid each strand of cotton with an accuracy that might be the envy of any embroiderer. Her face showed the pleasure she derived from the satin-stitch petal that put the finish to a flower. The hunchback, sitting between Madame Latournelle and Gobenheim, was swallowing tears and wondering how he could get round to Modeste, and whisper two words of warning in her ear. Madame Latournelle, by placing herself in front of Madame Mignon, had cut off Modeste with the diabolical ingenuity of a pious prude. Madame Mignon, silent, blind, and whiter than her usual pallor, plainly betrayed her knowledge of the ordeal to which the girl was to be subjected. Now, at the last moment, perhaps she disapproved of the stratagem, though deeming it necessary. Hence her silence. She was weeping in her

heart. Exupère, the trigger of the trap, knew nothing whatever of the piece in which chance had cast him for a part. Gobenheim was as indifferent as Modeste herself seemed to be —a consequence of his nature.

To a spectator in the secret, the contrast between the utter ignorance of one-half of the party and the tremulous tension of the others would have been thrilling. In these days, more than ever, novel-writers deal largely in such effects; and they are in their rights, for nature has at all times outdone their skill. In this case, as you will see, social nature—which is nature within nature—was allowing itself the pleasure of making fact more interesting than romance, just as torrents produce effects forbidden to painters and achieve marvels by arranging or polishing stones so that architects and sculptors are amazed.

It was eight o'clock. At this season of the year it is the hour of the last gleam of twilight. That evening the sky was cloudless, the mild air caressed the earth, flowers breathed their fragrance, the grinding gravel could be heard under the feet of persons returning from their walk. The sea shone like a mirror.

There was so little wind that the candles on the table burned with a steady flame though the windows were half-open. The room, the evening, the house—what a setting for the portrait of this young creature, who at the moment was being studied by her friends with the deep attention of an artist gazing at "Margherita Doni," one of the glories of the Pitti palace. Was Modeste, a flower enshrined like that of Catullus, worthy of all these precautions? You have seen the cage; this is the bird:

At the age of twenty, slender and delicately made, like one of the sirens invented by English painters to grace a book of beauty, Modeste, like her mother before her, bears the engaging expression of a grace little appreciated in France, where it is called sentimentality, though among the Germans it is

the poetry of the heart suffusing the surface, and displayed in affectation by simpletons, in exquisite manners by sensible girls. Her most conspicuous feature was her pale gold hair, which classed her with the women called, no doubt in memory of Eve, *blondes celestes* (heavenly fair), whose sheeny skin looks like silk paper laid over the flesh, shivering in the winter or reveling in the sunshine of a look, and making the hand envious of the eye. Under this hair, as light as marabout feathers, and worn in ringlets, the brow, so purely formed that it might have been drawn by compasses, is reserved and calm to placidity, though bright with thought; but when or where could a smoother one be found, or more transparently frank? It seems to have a lustre like pearl. Her eyes, of grayish blue, as clear as those of a child, have all a child's mischief and innocence, in harmony with the arch of eyebrows scarcely outlined, as lightly touched in as those painted in Chinese faces. This playful innocence is accentuated by nacreous tones, with blue veins round the eyes and on the temples, a peculiarity of those delicate complexions. Her face, of the oval so often seen in Raphael's Madonnas, is distinguished by the cool, maidenly flush of her cheeks, as tender as a China rose, on which the long lashes of her transparent eyelids cast a play of light and shade. Her throat, bent over her work, and slender to fragility, suggests the sweeping lines dear to Leonardo. A few freckles, like the patches of the past century, show that Modeste is a daughter of earth and not one of the creations seen in dreams by the Italian school of Angelico. Lips, full but finely curved, and somewhat satirical in expression, betray a love of pleasure. Her shape, pliant without being frail, would not scare away motherhood, like that of girls who seek to triumph through the unhealthy pressure of stays. Buckram, steel, and stay-lace never improved or formed such serpentine lines of elegance, resembling those of a young poplar swayed by the wind. A pearl-gray dress, long in the waist, and trimmed with cherry-colored

gimp, accentuated the pure bust and covered the shoulders, still somewhat thin, over a deep muslin tucker, which betrayed only the outline of the curves where the bosom joins the shoulders. At the sight of this countenance, at once vague and intelligent, with a singular touch of determination given to it by a straight nose with rosy nostrils and firmly-cut outlines—a countenance where the poetry of an almost mystical brow was belied by the voluptuous curve of the mouth—where, in the changing depths of the eyes, candor seemed to fight for the mastery with the most accomplished irony—an observer might have thought that this young girl, whose quick ear caught every sound, whose nose was open to the fragrance of the blue flower of the ideal, must be the arena of a struggle between the poetry that plays around the daily rising of the sun and the labors of the day, between fancy and reality. Modeste was both curious and modest, knowing her fate, and purely chaste, the virgin of Spain rather than of Raphael.

She raised her head on hearing Dumay say to Exupère, "Come here, young man," and, seeing them talk together in a corner of the room, she fancied it was about some commission for Paris. She looked at the friends who surrounded her as if astonished at their silence, and exclaimed with a perfectly natural air—

"Well, are you not going to play?" pointing to the green table that Madame Latournelle called the altar.

"Let us begin," said Dumay, after dismissing Exupère.

"Sit there, Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle, placing the table between the clerk and the group formed by Madame Mignon and her daughter.

"And you—come here," said Dumay to his wife, desiring her to stay near him.

Madame Dumay, a little American of six-and-thirty, secretly wiped away her tears; she was devoted to Modeste and dreaded a catastrophe.

"You are not lively this evening," said Modeste.

"We are playing," said Gobenheim, sorting his hand.

However interesting the situation may seem, it will be far more so when Dumay's position with regard to Modeste is explained. If the brevity of the style makes the narrative dry, this will be forgiven for the sake of hastening to the end of this scene, and of the need, which rules all dramas, for setting forth the argument.

Dumay—Anne-François-Bernard—born at Vannes, went as a soldier in 1799, joining the army of Italy. His father, a president of the revolutionary tribunal, had distinguished himself by so much vigor that the country was too hot to hold the son when his father, a second-rate lawyer, perished on the scaffold after the 9th of Thermidor. His mother died of grief; and Anne, having sold everything he possessed, went off to Italy at the age of twenty-two, just as our armies were defeated. In the department of the Var he met a young man who, for similar reasons, was also in search of glory, thinking the battlefield less dangerous than Provence.

Charles Mignon, the last survivor of the family to whom Paris owes the street and the hotel built by Cardinal Mignon, had for his father a crafty man, who wished to save his estate of la Bastie, a nice little fief under the Counts of Provence, from the clutches of the revolution. Like all nervous people in those days, the Comte de la Bastie, now Citizen Mignon, thought it healthier to cut off other heads than to lose his own. This supposed terrorist vanished on the 9th of Thermidor, and was thenceforth placed on the list of *émigrés*. The fief of la Bastie was sold. The pepper-caster towers of the dishonored château were razed to the ground. Finally, Citizen Mignon himself, discovered at Orange, was killed with his wife and children, with the exception of Charles Mignon, whom he had sent in search of a refuge in the department of the Hautes-Alpes. Charles, stopped by these shocking tidings, awaited quieter times in a valley of Mont

Genèvre. There he lived till 1799 on a few louis his father had put into his hand at parting. At last, when he was three-and-twenty, with no fortune but his handsome person—the southern beauty which, in its perfection, is a glorious thing, the type of Antinous, Hadrian's famous favorite—he resolved to stake his Provençal daring on the red field of war, regarding his courage as a vocation, as did many another. On his way to headquarters at Nice he met the Breton.

The two infantrymen, thrown together by the similarity of their destiny and the contrast of their nature, drank of the torrent from the same cup, divided their allowance of biscuit, and were sergeants by the time peace was signed after the battle of Marengo.

When war broke out again, Charles Mignon got leave to be transferred to the cavalry, and then lost sight of his comrade. The last of the Mignons of la Bastie was, in 1812, an officer of the Legion of Honor and major of a cavalry regiment, hoping to be reinstated as Comte de la Bastie and made colonel by the Emperor. Then, taken prisoner by the Russians, he was sent with many more to Siberia. His traveling companion was a poor lieutenant, in whom he recognized Anne Dumay, with no decoration, brave indeed, but hapless, like the millions of rank-and-file with worsted epaulettes, the web of men on which Napoleon painted the picture of his Empire. In Siberia, to pass the time, the lieutenant-çolonel taught his comrade arithmetic and writing, for education had seemed unimportant to his Scævola parent. Charles found in his first traveling companion one of those rare hearts to whom he could pour out all his griefs while confiding all his joys.

The Provençal had, ere this, met the fate which awaits every handsome young fellow. In 1804, at Frankfort-on-the-Main, he was adored by Bettina Wallenrod, the only daughter of a banker, and married her with all the more enthusiasm because she was rich, one of the beauties of the town, and he was still only a lieutenant with no fortune but the most un-

certain prospects of a soldier of that time. Old Wallenrod, a decayed German Baron—bankers are always barons—was enchanted to think that the handsome lieutenant was the sole representative of the Mignons of la Bastie, and approved the affections of the fair Bettina, whom a painter—for there was a painter then at Frankfort—had taken for his model of an ideal figure of Germany. Wallenrod, who already thought of his grandsons as Comtes de la Bastie-Wallenrod, invested in the French funds a sufficient sum to secure to his daughter thirty thousand francs a year. This dower made a very small hole in his coffers, seeing how small a capital was required. The Empire, following a practice not uncommon among debtors, rarely paid the half-yearly dividends. Charles, indeed, was somewhat alarmed at this investment, for he had not so much faith in the Imperial Eagle as the German Baron had. The phenomenon of belief, or of admiration, which is only a transient form of belief, can hardly exist in illicit companionship with the idol. An engineer dreads the machine which the traveler admires, and Napoleon's officers were the stokers of his locomotive when they were not the fuel. Baron von Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild then promised to help the young people. Charles loved Bettina Wallenrod as much as she loved him, and that is saying a great deal; but when a Provençal is fired, anything seems natural to him in the matter of feeling. How could he help worshiping a golden-haired woman who had stepped out of a picture by Albert Dürer, an angel of good temper, with a fortune famous in Frankfort?

So Charles had four children, of whom only two daughters were alive at the time when he poured out his sorrows on the Breton's heart. Without knowing them, Dumay was fond of these two little girls, the effect of the sympathy so well understood by Charles, who shows us the soldier as fatherly to every child. The elder, named Bettina Caroline, was born in 1805; the second, Marie Modeste, in 1808. The unhappy lieutenant-colonel, having had no news of those he loved,

came back on foot in 1814, with the lieutenant for his companion, all across Russia and Prussia. The two friends, for whom any difference of rank had ceased to exist, arrived at Frankfort just as Napoleon landed at Cannes. Charles found his wife at Frankfort, but in mourning; she had had the grief of losing the father who adored her, and who longed always to see her smiling, even by his death-bed. Old Wallenrod did not survive the overthrow of the Empire. At the age of seventy-two he had speculated largely in cotton, believing still in Napoleon's genius, and not knowing that genius is as often the slave of events as their master.

The last of the Wallenrods, the true Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild, had bought almost as many bales of cotton as the Emperor had sacrificed men during his tremendous campaign in France.

"I am tying in cotton" (I am dying in clover), said this father to his daughter, for he was of the Goriot species, trying to beguile her of her grief, which terrified him, "and I tie owing noting to noboty"—and the Franco-German died struggling with the French language his daughter loved.

Charles Mignon, happy to have saved his wife and daughters from this double shipwreck, now returned to Paris, where the Emperor made him lieutenant-colonel of the Cuirassiers of the Guard and commander of the Legion of Honor. The colonel at last was general and Count, after Napoleon's first success; but his dream was drowned in torrents of blood at Waterloo. He was slightly wounded, and retired to the Loire, leaving Tours before the troops were disbanded.

In the spring of 1816 Charles realized the capital of his thirty thousand francs a year, which gave him about four hundred thousand francs, and decided on going to make his fortune in America, leaving a country where persecution already pressed hardly on Napoleon's soldiers. He went from Paris to le Havre, accompanied by Dumay, whose life he had saved in one of the frequent chances of war, by taking

him behind him on his horse in the confusion that ended the day of Waterloo. Dumay shared the colonel's opinions and despondency. Charles, to whom the Breton clung like a dog, for the poor infantryman worshiped the two little girls, thought that Dumay's habits of obedience and discipline, his honesty and his attachment, would make him a servant not less faithful than useful. He therefore proposed to him to take service under him in private life. Dumay was very happy to find himself adopted into a family with whom he hoped to live like mistletoe on an oak.

While awaiting an opportunity of sailing, choosing among the ships, and meditating on the chances offered in the various ports of their destination, the colonel heard rumors of the splendid fortunes that the peace held in store for le Havre. While listening to a discussion between two of the natives, he saw a means of making his fortune, and set up forthwith as a shipowner, a banker, and a country gentleman. He invested two hundred thousand francs in land and houses, and freighted a ship for New York with a cargo of French silks bought at Lyons at a low figure. Dumay sailed on the vessel as his agent. While the colonel was settling himself with his family in the handsomest house in the Rue Royale, and studying the science of banking with all the energy and prodigious acumen of a Provençal, Dumay made two fortunes, for he returned with a cargo of cotton bought for a mere song. This transaction produced an enormous capital for Mignon's business. He then purchased the villa at Ingouville, and rewarded Dumay by giving him a small house in the Rue Royale.

The worthy Breton had brought back with him from New York with his bales a pretty little wife, who had been chiefly attracted by his nationality as a Frenchman. Miss Grummer owned about four thousand dollars (twenty thousand francs), which Dumay invested in his colonel's business. Dumay, now the *alter ego* of the shipowner, very soon learned bookkeeping, the science which, to use his phrase, distinguished the

sergeant-majors of trade. This guileless soldier, whom fortune had neglected for twenty years, thought himself the happiest man in the world when he saw himself master of a house—which his employer's munificence furnished very prettily—of twelve hundred francs a year of interest on his capital, and of three thousand six hundred francs in salary. Never in his dreams had Lieutenant Dumay hoped for such prosperity; but he was even happier in feeling himself the hub of the richest merchant's house in le Havre.

Madame Dumay had the sorrow of losing all her children at their birth, and the disasters of her last confinement left her no hope of having any; she therefore attached herself to the two Mignon girls as affectionately as Dumay, who would not have loved his own children so well. Madame Dumay, the child of agriculturists, accustomed to a thrifty life, found two thousand four hundred francs enough for herself and her housekeeping. Thus, year by year, Dumay put two thousand and some hundred francs into the Mignon concern. When the master made up the annual balance, he added to the cashier's credit a bonus in proportion to the business done. In 1824 the sum to the cashier's account amounted to fifty-eight thousand francs. Then it was that Charles Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, a title that was never mentioned, crowned his cashier's joy by giving him a lease of the chalet, where we now find Modeste and her mother.

Madame Mignon's deplorable condition had its cause in the catastrophe to which Charles' absence was due, for her husband had left her a still handsome woman. It had taken three years of sorrow to destroy the gentle German lady, but it was one of those sorrows which are like a worm lying at the heart of a fine fruit. The sum-total of her woes is easily stated: Two children who died young had stamped a double *ci-gît* on a soul which could never forget. Charles' captivity in Siberia had been to this dear and loving heart a daily death. The disasters of the great Wallenrod house and the

unhappy banker's death on his empty money-bags, coming in the midst of Bettina's suspense about her husband, was a final blow. The joy of seeing him again almost killed this German floweret. Then came the second overthrow of the Empire, and their plans for emigration had been like relapses of the same fit of fever.

At last ten years of constant prosperity, the amusements of her home-life, the handsomest house in le Havre, the dinners, balls, and entertainments given by the successful merchant, the magnificence of the Villa Mignon, the immense respect and high esteem enjoyed by her husband, with the undivided affection of this man, who responded to perfect love by love equally perfect—all these had reconciled the poor woman to life.

Then, at the moment when all her doubts were at rest, and she looked forward to a calm evening after her stormy day, a mysterious disaster, buried in the heart of the double household, and presently to be related, came like a summons from misfortune. In 1826, in the midst of a party, when all the town was ready to return Charles Mignon as its deputy, three letters (from New York, London, and Paris) came like three hammer-strokes on the glass house of prosperity. In ten minutes ruin swooped down with vulture's wings on this unheard-of good fortune, like the frost on the Grande Armée in 1812. In one night which he spent with Dumay over the books, Charles Mignon was prepared for the worst. It would absorb everything he possessed, not excepting the furniture, to pay everybody

"Le Havre," said the colonel to the lieutenant, "shall never see me in the mud. Dumay, I will take your sixty thousand francs at six per cent.——"

"At three, colonel."

"At nothing, then," said Charles peremptorily. "I make you my partner in my new enterprise. The 'Modeste,' which is no longer mine, sails to-morrow; the captain takes me with

him. You—I place you in charge of my wife and daughter. I shall never write. No news is good news."

Dumay, still but a lieutenant, had not asked his colonel by a word what his purpose was.

"I suspect," said he to Latournelle, with a knowing air, "that the colonel has laid his plans."

On the following morning, at break of day, he saw his master safe on board the good ship "Modeste," bound for Constantinople. Standing on the vessel's poop, the Breton said to the Provençal—

"What are your last orders, colonel?"

"That no man ever goes near the chalet!" cried the father, with difficulty restraining a tear. "Dumay, guard my last child as a bull-dog might. Death to any one who may try to tempt my second daughter! Fear nothing, not even the scaffold. I would meet you there!"

"Colonel, do your business in peace. I understand. You will find Mademoiselle Modeste as you leave her, or I shall be dead! You know me, and you know our two Pyrenean dogs. No one shall get at your daughter. Forgive me for using so many words."

The two soldiers embraced as men who had learned to appreciate each other in the heart of Siberia.

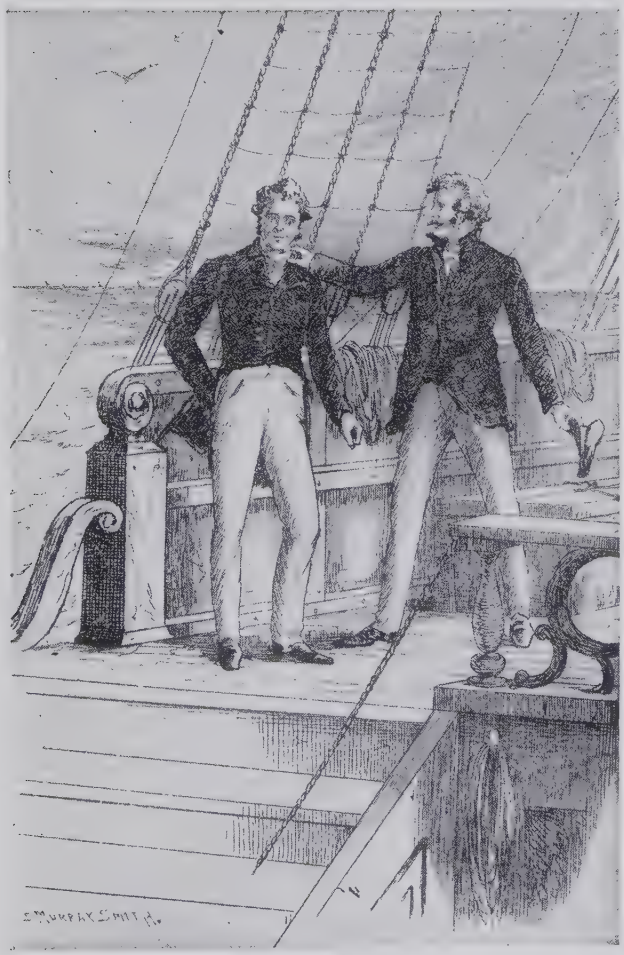
The same day the "Courrier du Havre" published this terrible, simple, vigorous, and honest leading paragraph:

"The house of Charles Mignon has suspended payment, but the undersigned liquidators pledge themselves to pay all the outstanding debts. Bearers of bills at date can at once discount them. The value of the landed estate will completely cover current accounts.

"This notice is issued for the honor of the house and to prevent any shock to general credit on the Havre Exchange.

"Monsieur Charles Mignon sailed this morning in the 'Modeste' for Asia Minor, having left a power-of-attorney

"DUMAY, GUARD MY LAST CHILD AS A BULL-DOG MIGHT."


C.M. MURRAY SMITH

to enable us to realize every form of property, even landed estate.

"DUMAY, Liquidator for the Banking Account.
"LATOURNELLE, Notary, Liquidator for the Houses and Land in Town and Country.
"GOBENHEIM, Liquidator for Commercial Bills."

Latournelle owed his prosperity to Monsieur Mignon's kindness; he had, in 1817, lent the notary a hundred thousand francs to buy the best business in le Havre. The poor lawyer, without any pecuniary resources, was by that time forty years old; he had been a head clerk for ten years, and looked forward to being a clerk for the rest of his days. He was the only man in le Havre whose devotion could compare with Dumay's, for Gobenheim took advantage of this bankruptcy to carry on Mignon's connection and business, which enabled him to start his little banking concern. While universal regret was expressed on 'Change, on the quays, and in every home; while praises of a blameless, honorable, and beneficent man were on every lip, Latournelle and Dumay, as silent and as busy as emmets, were selling, realizing, paying, and settling up. Vilquin gave himself airs of generosity, and bought the villa, the town-house, and a farm, and Latournelle took advantage of this first impulse to extract a good price from Vilquin.

Every one wanted to call on Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, but they had obeyed Charles and taken refuge at the chalet the very morning of his departure, of which at the first moment they knew nothing. Not to be shaken in his purpose by their grief, the courageous banker had kissed his wife and daughter in their sleep. Three hundred cards were left at the door. A fortnight later the most complete oblivion, as Charles had prophesied, showed the two women the wisdom and dignity of the step enjoined on them.

Dumay appointed representatives of his master at New York,

London, and Paris. He followed up the liquidation of the three banking houses to which Mignon's ruin was due, and between 1826 and 1828 recovered five hundred thousand francs, the eighth part of Charles' fortune. In obedience to the orders drawn up the night before his departure, Dumay forwarded this sum at the beginning of 1828, through the house of Mongenod at New York, to be placed to Monsieur Mignon's credit. All this was done with military punctuality, excepting with regard to the retention of thirty thousand francs for the personal needs of Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon. This, which Charles had ordered, Dumay did not carry out. The Breton sold his house in the town for twenty thousand francs, and gave this to Madame Mignon, reflecting that the more money his colonel could command, the sooner he would return.

"For lack of thirty thousand francs a man sometimes is lost," said he to Latournelle, who bought the house at his friend's price; and there the inhabitants of the chalet could always find room. Many were the pleasant hours that Madame Mignon, her daughter, Modeste, and also Lieutenant Dumay and his ever-watchful wife, passed in that hospitable retreat. Butscha's wit constantly entertained them.

This, to the famous house of Mignon, le Havre, was the outcome of the crisis which, in 1825–26, upset the principal centres of commerce, and caused—if you remember that hurricane—the ruin of several Paris bankers, one of them the president of the chamber of commerce. It is intelligible that this tremendous overthrow, closing a civic reign of ten years, might have been a death-blow to Bettina Wallenrod, who once more found herself parted from her husband, knowing nothing of his fate, apparently as full of peril and adventure as Siberian exile; but the trouble that was really bringing her to the grave was to these visible griefs what an ill-starred child is to the commonplace troubles of a family—a child that gnaws and devours its home. The fatal stone that had struck

this mother's heart was a tombstone in the little cemetery of Ingouville, on which may be read :

BETTINA CAROLINE MIGNON

AGED TWO-AND-TWENTY

PRAY FOR HER !

1827.

This inscription is for the girl who lies there what many an epitaph is for the dead—a table of contents to an unknown book. Here is the book in its terrible epitome, and it may explain the pledge demanded and given in the parting words of the colonel and subaltern.

A young man, extremely handsome, named Georges d'Estourny, came to le Havre on the common pretext of seeing the sea, and he saw Caroline Mignon. A man of some pretense to fashion, and from Paris, never lacks some introductions ; he was therefore invited by the intervention of a friend of the Mignons to an entertainment at Ingouville. He fell very much in love with Caroline and her fortune and schemed for a happy issue. At the end of three months he had played every trick of the seducer, and run away with Caroline. The father of a family who has two daughters ought no more to admit a young man to his house without knowing him than he should allow books or newspapers to lie about without having read them. The innocence of a girl is like milk which is turned by a thunder-clap, by an evil smell, by a hot day, or even by a breath.

When he read his eldest daughter's farewell letter, Charles Mignon made Madame Dumay set out instantly for Paris. The family alleged the need for a change of air suddenly prescribed by the family doctor, who lent himself to this necessary pretext ; but this could not keep the town from gossiping about her absence.

"What, such a strong girl, with the complexion of a Spaniard, and hair like jet! She, consumptive!"

"Yes—so they say. She did something imprudent——"

"Ah, ha!" cried some Vilquin.

"She came in from a ride bathed in perspiration and drank iced water, at least so Dr. Troussenard says."

By the time Madame Dumay returned, the troubles of the Mignons were an exhausted subject; no one thought anything more of Caroline's absence or the return of the cashier's wife.

At the beginning of 1827 the newspapers were full of the trial of Georges d'Estourny, who was proved guilty of constant cheating at play. This young pirate vanished abroad without thinking anything more about Mademoiselle Mignon, whose money value was destroyed by the bankruptcy at le Havre. Before long Caroline knew that she was deserted and her father a ruined man. She came home in a fearful state of mortal illness, and died a few days afterward at the chalet. Her death, at any rate, saved her reputation. The malady spoken of by Monsieur Mignon at the time of his daughter's elopement was very generally believed in, and the medical orders which had sent her off, it was said, to Nice.

To the very last the mother hoped to save her child. Bettina was her darling, as Modeste was her father's. There was something touching in this preference: Bettina was the image of Charles, as Modeste was of her mother. They perpetuated their love in their children. Caroline, a Provençal, inherited from her father the beautiful blue-black hair, like a raven's wing, which we admire in the daughters of the south, the hazel, almond-shaped eye as bright as a star, the olive complexion with the golden glow of a velvety fruit, the arched foot, the Spanish bust that swells beneath the bodice. And the father and mother were alike proud of the charming contrast of the two sisters.

"A demon and an angel!" people used to say, without ill meaning, though it was prophetic.

After spending a month in tears in her room, where she insisted on staying and seeing no one, the poor German lady came forth with her eyes seriously injured. Before she lost her sight she went, in spite of all her friends, to look at Caroline's tomb. This last image remained bright in her darkness, as the red spectre of the last object we have seen remains when we shut our eyes in bright daylight. After this terrible and twofold disaster, Dumay, though he could not be more devoted, was more anxious than ever about Modeste, now an only child, though her father knew it not. Madame Dumay, who was crazy about Modeste, like all women who have no children, overpowered her with her deputy motherhood, but without disobeying her husband's orders. Dumay was distrustful of female friendships. His injunctions were absolute.

"If ever any man, of whatever age or rank, speaks to Modeste," said Dumay, "if he looks at her, casts sheep's eyes at her, he is a dead man. I will blow his brains out and surrender myself to the public prosecutor. My death may save her. If you do not wish to see me cut my throat, fill my place unfailingly when I am in town."

For three years Dumay had examined his pistols every night. He seemed to have included in his oath the two Pyrenean dogs, remarkably intelligent beasts; one slept in the house, the other was sentinel in a kennel that he never came out of, and he never barked; but the minute when those dogs should set their teeth in an intruder would be a terrible one for him.

The life may now be imagined which the mother and daughter led at the chalet. Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, frequently accompanied by Gobenheim, came almost every evening to visit their friends and play a rubber. Conversation would turn on business at le Havre, on the trivial events of country-town life. They left between nine and ten. Modeste went to put her mother to bed; they said their prayers together, they talked over their hopes, they spoke of

the dearly loved traveler. After kissing her mother, Modeste went to her own room at about ten o'clock. Next morning Modeste dressed her mother with the same care, the same prayers, the same little chat. To Modeste's honor, from the day when her mother's terrible infirmity deprived her of one of her senses, she made herself her waiting-maid, and always with the same solicitude at every hour, without wearying of it, or finding it monotonous. Her affection was supreme, and always ready, with a sweetness rare in young girls, and that was highly appreciated by those who saw her tenderness. And so Modeste was, in the eyes of the Latournelles and of Monsieur and Madame Dumay, the jewel I have described. Between breakfast and dinner, on sunny days, Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay took a little walk as far as the shore, Modeste assisting, for the blind woman needed the support of two arms.

A month before the scene in which this digression falls as a parenthesis, Madame Mignon had held council with her only friends, Madame Latournelle, the notary, and Dumay, while Madame Dumay was giving Modeste the little diversion of a long walk.

"Listen, my friends," said the blind woman, "my daughter is in love. I feel it. A strange change has come over her, and I cannot think how you have failed to observe it——"

"Bless my stars!" the lieutenant exclaimed.

"Do not interrupt me, Dumay. For the last two months Modeste has dressed herself with care as if she were going to meet some one. She has become excessively particular about her shoes; she wants her foot to look nice, and scolds Madame Gobain the shoemaker. Some days the poor child sits gloomy and watchful, as if she expected somebody; her voice is short and sharp, as though by questioning her I broke in on her expectancy, her secret hopes; and then, if that somebody has been——"

"Bless my stars!"

"Sit down, Dumay," said the lady. "Well, then Modeste is gay. Oh! you do not see that she is gay; you cannot discern these shades, too subtle for eyes to see that have all nature to look at. Her cheerfulness betrays itself in the tones of her voice, accents which I can detect and account for. Modeste, instead of sitting still and dreaming, expends her light activity in flighty movement. In short, she is happy! There is a tone of thanksgiving even in the ideas she utters. Oh, my friends, I have learned to know happiness as well as grief. By the kiss my poor Modeste gives me I can guess what is going on in her mind: whether she has had what she was expecting, or is uneasy. There are many shades in kisses, even in those of a young girl—for Modeste is innocence itself, but it is not ignorant innocence. Though I am blind, my affection is clairvoyante, and I implore you—watch my daughter."

On this, Dumay, quite ferocious; the notary as a man who is bent on solving a riddle; Madame Latournelle as a duenna who has been cheated; and Madame Dumay, who shared her husband's fears—all constituted themselves spies over Modeste. Modeste was never alone for a moment. Dumay spent whole nights under the windows, wrapped in a cloak like a jealous Spaniard; still, armed as he was with military sagacity, he could find no accusing clue. Unless she were in love with the nightingales in Vilquin's park, or some goblin prince, Modeste could have seen no one, could neither have received nor given a signal. Madame Dumay, who never went to bed till she had seen Modeste asleep, hovered about the roads on the high ground near the chalet with a vigilance equal to her husband's. Under the eyes of these four Arguses, the blameless child, whose smallest actions were reported and analyzed, was so absolutely acquitted of any criminal proceedings, that the friends suspected Madame Mignon of a craze, a monomania. It devolved on Madame Latournelle, who

herself took Modeste to church and home again, to tell the mother that she was under a mistake.

"Modeste," said she, "is a very enthusiastic young person; she has passions for this one's poetry and that one's prose. You could not see what an impression was made on her by that executioner's piece (a phrase of Butscha's, who lent wit without any return to his benefactress), called 'Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné' (The Condemned's Last Day); but she seemed to me beside herself with her admiration of that Monsieur Hugo. I cannot think where that sort of people (Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and Byron were what Madame Latournelle meant by *that sort*) go to find their ideas. The little thing talked to me about 'Childe Harold;' I did not choose to have the worst of it; I was fool enough to set to work to read it that I might be able to argue with her. I don't know whether it is to be set down to the translation, but my heart heaved, my eyes were dizzy. I could not get on with it. It is full of howling comparisons, of rocks that faint away, of the lava of war!

"Of course, as it is an Englishman on his travels, one must expect something queer, but this is really too much! You fancy you are in Spain, and he carries you up into the clouds above the Alps; he makes the torrents and the stars speak; and then there are too many virgins! You get sick of them. In short, after Napoleon's campaigns we have had enough of flaming shot and sounding brass which roll on from page to page. Modeste tells me that all this pathos comes from the translator, and I ought to read the English. But I am not going to learn English for Lord Byron when I would not learn it for Exupère! I much prefer the romances of Ducray-Duménil to these English romances! I am too thoroughly Norman to fall in love with everything that comes from abroad, and especially from England——"

Madame Mignon, notwithstanding her perpetual mourning, could not help smiling at the idea of Madame Latournelle

reading "Childe Harold." The stern lady accepted this smile as approbation of her doctrines.

"And so, my dear Madame Mignon, you mistake Modeste's imaginings, the result of her reading, for love affairs. She is twenty. At that age a girl loves herself. She dresses to see herself dressed. Why, I used to make my little sister, who is dead now, put on a man's hat, and we played at gentleman and lady—— You, at Frankfort, had a happy girlhood, but let us be just: Modeste here has no amusements. In spite of our readiness to meet her lightest wishes, she knows that she is guarded, and the life she leads has little pleasure to offer a girl who could not, as she can, find something to divert her in books. Take my word for it, she loves no one but you. Think yourself lucky that she falls in love with nobody but Lord Byron's corsairs, Walter Scott's romantic heroes, or your Germans, Count Egmont, Werther, Schiller, and all the other *ers*."

"Well, madame?" said Dumay respectfully, alarmed by Madame Mignon's silence.

"Modeste is not merely ready for love; she loves somebody," said the mother obstinately.

"Madame, my life is at stake, and you will no doubt allow me—not for my own sake, but for my poor wife's and for the colonel's, and all our sakes—to try to find out which is mistaken—the watch-dog or the mother."

"It is you, Dumay! Oh, if I could but look my daughter in the face!" sobbed the poor blind woman.

"But who is there that she can love?" replied Madame Latournelle. "As for us—I can answer for my Exupère."

"It cannot be Gobenheim, whom we hardly see for nine hours out of the week since the colonel went away. Besides, he is not thinking of Modeste—that crown-piece made man! His uncle, Gobenheim-Keller, told him, 'Get rich enough to marry a Keller!' With that for a programme, there is no fear that he will even know of what sex Modeste is. Those

are all the men we see here. I do not count Butscha, poor little hunchback. I love him; he is your Dumay, madame," he said to the notary's wife. "Butscha knows very well that if he glanced at Modeste it would cost him a combing *à la mode de Vannes*. Not a soul ever comes near us. Madame Latournelle, who since—since your misfortune, comes to take Modeste to church and bring her home again, has watched her carefully these last days during the mass, and has seen nothing suspicious about her. And then, if I must tell you everything, I myself have raked the paths round the house for the last month, and I have always found them in the morning with no footmarks."

"Rakes are not costly nor difficult to use," said the German lady.

"And the dogs?" asked Dumay.

"Lovers can find sops for them," replied Madame Mignon.

"I could blow out my own brains if you are right, for I should be done for," cried Dumay.

"And why, Dumay?"

"Madame, I could not meet the colonel's eye if he were not to find his daughter, especially now that she is his only child; and as pure, as virtuous as she was when he said to me on board the ship, 'Do not let the fear of the scaffold stop you, Dumay, when Modeste's honor is at stake.'"

"I know you both—how like you!" murmured Madame Mignon, much moved.

"I will wager my eternal salvation that Modeste is as innocent as she was in her cradle," quoth Madame Dumay.

"Oh, I will know all about it," replied Dumay, "if Madame la Comtesse will allow me to try a plan, for old soldiers are knowing in stratagems."

"I allow you to do anything that may clear up the matter without injuring our last surviving child."

"And what will you do, Anne," asked his wife, "to find out a young girl's secret when it is so closely kept?"

"All of you obey me exactly," returned the lieutenant, "for you must all help."

This brief account, which, if elaborately worked up, would have furnished forth a complete picture of domestic life—how many families will recognize in it the events of their own home!—is enough to give a clue to the importance of the little details previously given of the persons and circumstances of this evening, when the lieutenant had undertaken to cope with a young girl, and to drag from the recesses of her heart a passion detected by her blind mother.

An hour went by in ominous calm, broken only by the hieroglyphical phrases of the whist-players: "Spade! Trump! Cut! Have we the honors? Two trebles! Eight all! Who deals?"—phrases representing in these days the great emotions of the aristocracy of Europe. Modeste stitched, without any surprise at her mother's taciturnity. Madame Mignon's pocket-handkerchief slipped off her lap on to the floor; Butscha flew to pick it up. He was close to Modeste, and as he rose whispered in her ear, "Be on your guard!"

Modeste raised astonished eyes, and their light, pointed darts as it seemed, filled the hunchback with ineffable joy.

"She loves no one," said the poor fellow to himself, and he rubbed his hands hard enough to flay them.

At this moment Exupère flew through the garden and into the house, rushing into the drawing-room like a whirlwind, and said in Dumay's ear, "Here is the young man!"

Dumay rose, seized his pistols, and went out.

"Good God! Supposing he kills him!" cried Madame Dumay, who burst into tears.

"But what is going on?" asked Modeste, looking at her friends with an air of perfect candor, and without any alarm.

"Something about a young man who prowls round the chalet!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What then?" said Modeste. "Why should Dumay kill him?"

"*Sancta simplicitas!*" said Butscha, looking at his master as proudly as Alexander gazes at Babylon in Lebrun's picture.

"Where are you going, Modeste?" asked her mother, as her daughter was leaving the room.

"To get everything ready for you to go to bed, mamma," replied Modeste, in a voice as clear as the notes of a harmonica.

"You have had all your trouble for nothing," said Butscha to Dumay when he came in.

"Modeste is as saintly as the Virgin on our altar!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"Ah, good heavens! Such agitation is too much for me," said the cashier. "And yet I am a strong man."

"I would give twenty-five sous to understand one word of what you are at this evening," said Gobenheim; "you all seem to me to have gone mad."

"And yet a treasure is at stake," said Butscha, standing on tiptoe to speak into Gobenheim's ear.

"Unfortunately, I am almost positive of the truth of what I say," repeated the mother.

"Then it now lies with you, madame," said Dumay quietly, "to prove that we are wrong."

When he found that nothing was involved but Modeste's reputation, Gobenheim took his hat, bowed, and went away, carrying off ten sous, regarding a fresh rubber as hopeless.

"Exupère, and you Butscha, leave us," said Madame Latournelle. "Go down to the town. You will be in time to see one piece; I will treat you to the play."

As soon as Madame Mignon was left with her four friends, Madame Latournelle glanced at Dumay, who, being a Breton, understood the mother's persistency, and then at her husband fidgeting with the cards, and thought herself justified in speaking.

"Come, Madame Mignon, tell us what decisive evidence has struck your ear?"

"Oh, my dear friend, if you were a musician, you, like me, would have heard Modeste's tone when she sings of love."

The piano belonging to the two sisters was one of the few feminine luxuries among the furniture brought from the town-house to the chalet. Modeste had mitigated some tedium by studying without a master. She was a born musician, and often played to cheer her mother. She sang with natural grace the German airs her mother taught her. From this instruction and this endeavor had resulted the phenomenon, not uncommon in natures prompted by a vocation, that Modeste unconsciously composed purely melodic strains, as such composition is possible without a knowledge of harmony. Melody is to music what imagery and feeling are to poetry, a flower that may blossom spontaneously. All nations have had popular melodies before the introduction of harmony. Botany came after flowers. Thus Modeste, without having learned anything of the technique of painting beyond what she had gathered from seeing her sister work in water-colors, could stand enchanted before a picture by Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Murillo, Rembrandt, Albert Dürer, or Holbein; that is to say, the highest ideal of each nation. Now, for about a month, Modeste had more especially burst into nightingale songs, into new strains so poetical as to arouse her mother's attention, surprised as she was to find Modeste bent on composition and trying airs to unfamiliar words.

"If your suspicions have no other foundation," said Latournelle to Madame Mignon, "I pity your sensitiveness."

"When a young girl sings in Brittany," said Dumay, now grave again, "the lover is very near."

"I will let you overhear Modeste improvising," said the mother, "and you will see!——"

"Poor child!" said Madame Dumay. "If she could but know of our anxiety, she would be in despair; and she would

tell us the truth, especially if she knew all it meant to Dumay."

"To-morrow, my friends, I will question Modeste," said Madame Mignon; "and perhaps I shall achieve more by affection than you have gained by ruse."

Was the comedy of the "Ill-guarded Daughter" being enacted here, as it is everywhere and at all times, while these worthy Bartolos, these spies, these vigilant watch-dogs failed to scent, to guess, to detect the lover, the conspiracy, the smoke of the fire?

This was not the consequence of any defiance between a prisoner and her gaolers, between the tyranny of the dungeon and the liberty of the captive, but merely the eternal repetition of the first drama played as the curtain rose on the new creation: Eve in Paradise. Which, in this case, was right—the mother or the watch-dog?

None of the persons about Modeste understood the girl's heart—for, be assured, the soul and the face were in unison. Modeste had transplanted her life into a world of which the existence is as completely denied in our days as the New World of Christopher Columbus was denied in the sixteenth century. Fortunately, she could be silent, or she would have been thought mad.

We must first explain the influence that past events had had on the girl. Two especially had formed her character, as they had awakened her intelligence. Monsieur and Madame Mignon, startled by the disaster that had come upon Bettina, had, before their bankruptcy, resolved on seeing Modeste married, and their choice fell on the son of a wealthy banker, a native of Hamburg, who had settled at le Havre in 1815, and who was under some obligations to them. This young man—Francisque Althor—the dandy of le Havre, handsome in the style which captivates the Philistine, what the English call a heavy-weight—florid, healthy coloring, firm flesh, and square shoulders—threw over his bride-elect, at the news of

their disaster, so completely that he had never since set eyes on Modeste, or on Madame Mignon, or on the Dumays. Latournelle having made so bold as to speak to the father, Jacob Althor, on the subject, the old German had shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "I do not know what you mean."

This reply, repeated to Modeste to give her experience, was a lesson she understood all the better because Latournelle and Dumay made voluminous comments on this base desertion. Charles Mignon's two daughters, spoiled children as they were, rode, had their own horses and servants, and enjoyed fatal liberty. Modeste, finding herself in command of a recognized lover, had allowed Francisque to kiss her hand, and put his arm round her to help her to mount; she had accepted flowers and the trifling gifts of affection which are the burden of paying court to a young lady; she worked him a purse, believing in bonds of that kind, so strong to noble souls, but mere cobwebs to the Gobenheims, Vilquins, and Althors.

In the course of the spring, after Madame Mignon and her daughter had moved into the chalet, Francisque Althor went to dine with the Vilquins. On catching sight of Modeste beyond the wall of the lawn, he looked away. Six weeks after, he married Mademoiselle Vilquin—the eldest. Thus Modeste learned that she, handsome, young, and well born, had for three months been simply Mademoiselle Million. So Modeste's poverty, which was of course known, was a sentinel which guarded the ways to the chalet quite as well as the Dumays' prudence and the Latournelles' vigilance. Mademoiselle Mignon was never mentioned but with insulting pity: "Poor girl! what will become of her? She will die an old maid." "What a hard lot! After seeing all the world at her feet, and having a chance of marrying Althor, to find that no one will have anything to say to her?" "Such a life of luxury, my dear! and to have sunk to penury!"

Nor were these insults spoken in private and only guessed

by Modeste; more than once she heard them uttered by the young men and girls of the town when walking at Ingouville, who, knowing that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon lived at the chalet, discussed them audibly as they went past the pretty little house. Some of the Vilquins' friends wondered that these ladies could bear to live so near the home of their former splendor. Modeste, sitting behind closed shutters, often heard such impertinence as this: "I cannot think how they can live there!" one would say to another, walking round the garden, perhaps to help the Vilquins to be rid of their tenants. "What do they live on? What can they do there? The old woman is gone blind! Is Mademoiselle Mignon still pretty? Ah, she has no horses now. How dashing she used to be!"

As she heard this savage nonsense spoken by envy, foul-mouthed and surly, and tilting at the past, many girls would have felt the blood rise to their very brow; others would have wept; some would have felt a surge of rage; but Modeste smiled as we smile at a theatre, hearing actors speak. Her pride could not descend to the level which such words, rising from below, could reach.

The other event was even more serious than this mercenary desertion. Bettina Caroline had died in her sister's arms; Modeste had nursed her with the devotion of a woman, with the inquisitiveness of a maiden imagination. The two girls, in the watches of the night, had exchanged many a confidence. What dramatic interest hung around Bettina in the eyes of her innocent sister! Bettina knew passion only as misfortune; she was dying because she had loved. Between two girls every man, wretch though he be, is a lover. Passion is the one thing really absolute in human life; it will always have its own. Georges d'Estourny, a gambler, dissipated and guilty, always dwelt in the memory of these two young things as the Parisian dandy of the Havre parties, the cynosure of every woman—Bettina believed that she had snatched

him from Madame Vilquin's flirtations—and, to crown all, Bettina's successful lover. In a young girl her worship is stronger than social reprobation. In Bettina's mind, justice had erred ; how should she have condemned a young man by whom she had been loved for six months, loved with passion in the mysterious retreat where Georges hid her in Paris, that he might preserve his liberty. Thus Bettina, in her death, had inoculated her sister with love.

The sisters had often discussed the great drama of passion, to which imagination lends added importance ; and the dead girl had taken Modeste's purity with her to her grave, leaving her not perhaps all-knowing, but, at any rate, all-curious. At the same time, remorse had often set sharp pangs in Bettina's heart, and she lavished warnings on her sister. In the midst of her revelations, she never failed to preach obedience in Modeste, absolute obedience to her family. On the eve of her death, she implored her sister to remember the pillow she had soaked with her tears, and never to imitate the conduct her sufferings could scarcely expiate. Bettina accused herself of having brought the lightning down on those dear to her; she died in despair at not receiving her father's forgiveness. In spite of the consolations of religion, which was softened by such deep repentance, Bettina's last words, in a heart-rending cry, were, "Father! Father!"

"Never give your heart but with your hand," said she to Modeste, an hour before her death ; "and, above all, accept no attentions without my mother's consent or papa's."

These words, touching in their simple truth and spoken in the hour of death, found an echo in Modeste's mind, all the more because Bettina made her take a solemn vow. The poor girl, with prophetic insight, drew from under her pillow a ring on which she had had engraved *Pense à Bettina*, 1827 —"Remember Bettina"—instead of a motto, sending it by the hand of her faithful servant Françoise Cochet, to be done in the town. A few minutes before she breathed her last

sigh, she placed this ring on her sister's finger, begging her to wear it till she should be married. Thus, between these two girls there had been a strange succession of acute remorse and artless descriptions of that brief summer which had been so soon followed by the autumn winds of desertion, while tears, regrets, and memories were constantly overruled by a dread of evil.

And yet this drama of the young creature seduced, and returning to die of a dreadful disorder under the roof of elegant poverty, the meanness of the Vilquins' son-in-law, and her mother's blindness, resulting from her griefs, only account for the surface of Modeste's character, with which the Dumays and the Latournelles had to be content, for no devotion can fill the mother's place. This monotonous life in the pretty chalet, among the beautiful flowers grown by Dumay; these habits, as regular as the working of a clock; this provincial propriety; these rubbers at cards by which she sat knitting; this silence, only broken by the moaning of the sea at the equinoxes; this monastic peace covered the stormiest kind of life—the life of ideas, the life of the spiritual world.

We sometimes wonder at the lapses of young girls, but that is when they have no blind mother to sound with her stick the depths of the maiden heart undermined by the caverns of fancy.

The Dumays were asleep when Modeste opened her window, imagining that a man might pass by—the man of her dreams, the knight who would take her on a pillion, defying Dumay's pistols. In her dejection after her sister's death, Modeste had plunged into such constant reading as was enough to make her idiotic. Having been brought up to speak two languages, she was mistress of German as well as of French; then she and Caroline had learned English of Madame Dumay. Modeste, who, in such matters, found little supervision from her uncultivated companions, fed her soul on the masterpieces of modern English, German, and French literature—Lord Byron,

Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott, Hugo, Lamartine, Crabbe, Moore, the great works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, history and the theatre, romance from Rabelais to Manon Lescaut, from Montaigne's "Essays" to Diderot, from the "Fabliaux" to "La Nouvelle Héloïse," the thoughts of three countries furnished her brain with a medley of images. And her mind was beautiful in its cold guilelessness, its repressed virginal instincts, from which sprang forth, flashing, armed, sincere, and powerful, an intense admiration for genius. To Modeste, a new book was a great event; she was so happy over a great work as to alarm Madame Latournelle, as we have seen, and saddened when it failed to take her heart by storm.

But no gleam of this lurid flame ever appeared on the surface; it escaped the eye of Lieutenant Dumay and his wife as well as of the Latournelles; but the ear of the blind mother could not fail to hear its crackling. The deep contempt which Modeste thenceforth conceived for all ordinary men soon gave her countenance an indescribably proud and shy expression which qualified its German simplicity, but which agrees with one detail of her face; her hair, growing in a point in the middle of her forehead, seems to continue the slight furrow made by thought between her brows, and makes this shy look perhaps a little too wild.

This sweet girl's voice—before his departure Charles Mignon used to call her his little "Solomon's slipper," she was so clever—had acquired delightful flexibility of accent from her study of three languages. This advantage is yet further enhanced by a suave fresh quality which goes to the heart as well as to the ear. Though her mother could not see the hope of high destiny stamped on her daughter's brow, she could study the changes of her soul's development in the tones of that amorous voice.

After this period of ravenous reading, there came to Modeste a phase of the singular faculty possessed by a lively

imagination; of living as an actor in an existence pictured as in a dream; of representing things wished for with a vividness so keen that it verges on reality; of enjoying them in fancy, of devouring time even, seeing herself married, grown old, attending her own funeral, like Charles V.—in short, of playing out the drama of life, and at need that of death too.

As for Modeste, she played the drama of love. She imagined herself adored to the height of her wishes, and passing through every social phase. As the heroine of some dark romance, she loved either the executioner or some villain who died on the scaffold, or else, like her sister, some penniless fop, whose misdemeanors were the affair of the police court. She pictured herself as a courtesan, and laughed men to scorn in the midst of perpetual festivities, like Ninon. By turns, she led the life of an adventuress or of a popular actress, going through the vicissitudes of a Gil Blas or the triumphs of Pasta, Malibran, Florine. Satiated with horrors, she would come back to real life. She married a notary, she ate the dry bread of respectability, she saw herself in Madame Latournelle. She accepted a laborious life, facing the worries of accumulating a fortune; then she began to romance again: she was loved for her beauty; the son of a peer of France, artistic and eccentric, read her heart, and discerned the star which the genius of a Staël had set on her brow. At last her father returned a millionaire. Justified by experience, she subjected her lovers to tests, preserving her own freedom; she owned a splendid château, servants' carriages, everything that luxury has most curious to bestow; and she mystified her lovers till she was forty, when she accepted an offer.

This edition of the "Arabian Nights," of which there was but one copy, lasted nearly a year, and brought Modeste to satiety of invention. She too often held life in the hollow of her hand; she could say to herself very philosophically, and too seriously, too bitterly, too often, "Well; and then?" not to sink now to her waist in those depths of disgust, into

which men of genius fall who are too eager to escape by the vast labor of the task to which they have devoted themselves. But for her rich nature and her youth, Modeste would have retired to a cloister. This satiety flung the girl, still soaked in Catholic feeling, into a love of goodness and of the infinitude of heaven. She conceived of charity as the occupation of her life; still she groped in forlorn gloom as she found there no aliment for the fancy that gnawed at her heart like a malignant insect in the cup of a flower. She calmly sewed on baby clothes for poor women; and she listened absently to Monsieur Latournelle grumbling at Monsieur Dumay for trumping a thirteenth, or forcing him to play his last trump. Faith led Modeste into a strange path. She fancied that by becoming irreproachable in the Catholic sense, she might achieve such a pitch of sanctity that God would hear her and grant her desires.

"'Faith,' as Jesus Christ says, 'can remove mountains;' the Saviour made His apostle walk on the Lake of Tiberias, while I only ask of God to send me a husband," thought she. "That is much easier than going for a walk on the sea."

She fasted all through Lent, and did not commit the smallest sin; then she promised herself that on coming out of church on a certain day she would meet a handsome young man, worthy of her, whom her mother would approve, and who would follow her, madly in love. On the day she had fixed for God to send her this angel without fail, she was persistently followed by a horrible beggar; it poured with rain; and there was not one young man out of doors. She went down to the quay to see the English come on shore, but every Englishman had an English damsel almost as handsome as herself, and Modeste could not see anything like a "Childe Harold" who had lost his way. At that stage tears rose to her eyes as she sat, like Marius, on the ruins of her imaginings. One day when she made an appointment with God for the third time, she believed that the elect of her dreams had come

into the church, and she dragged Madame Latournelle to look behind every pillar, imagining that he was hiding out of delicacy. Thenceforth she concluded that God had no power. She often made conversations with this imaginary lover, inventing question and answer, and giving him a very pretty wit.

Thus it was her heart's excessive ambition, buried in romance, which gave Modeste the discretion so much admired by the good people who watched over her; they might have brought her many a Francisque Althor or Vilquin *fils*, she would not have stooped to such boors. She required simply and purely a man of genius; talent she thought little of, as a barrister is nothing to a girl who is set on an ambassador. She wished for riches only to cast them at her idol's feet. The golden background against which the figures of her dreams stood out was less precious than her heart overflowing with a woman's delicacy; for her ruling idea was to give wealth and happiness to a Tasso, a Milton, a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Murat, a Christopher Columbus. Vulgar sorrows appealed but little to this soul, which longed to extinguish the stake of such martyrs unrecognized during their lifetime. Modeste thirsted for unconfessed suffering, the great anguish of the mind.

Sometimes she imagined the balm, she elaborated the tenderness, the music, the thousand devices by which she would have soothed the fierce misanthropy of Jean-Jacques. Again she fancied herself the wife of Lord Byron, and almost entered into his scorn of realities, while making herself as fantastic as the poetry of Manfred, and into his doubts while making him a Catholic. Modeste accused all the women of the seventeenth century as guilty of Molière's melancholy.

"How is it," she wondered, "that some living, wealthy, and beautiful woman does not rush forth to meet every man of genius, to make herself his slave like Lara, the mysterious page?"

As you see, she had quite understood the English poet's wail, as sung by Gulnare. She greatly admired the conduct of the young English girl who came to propose to the younger Crébillon, who married her. The story of Sterne and Eliza Draper was a joy to her for some months; as the imaginary heroine of a similar romance she studied the sublime part of Eliza again and again. The exquisite feeling so gracefully expressed in those letters filled her eyes with the tears which, it is said, never rose to those of the wittiest of English writers.

Modeste thus lived for some time by her sympathy, not merely with the works, but with the personal character of her favorite authors. Goldsmith, the author of "Obermann," Charles Nodier, Maturin—the poorest, the most unhappy were her gods; she understood their sufferings, she entered into their squalor, blending with heaven-sent visions; she poured on them the treasures of her heart; she pictured herself clearly as supplying the comforts of life to these artists, martyrs to their gifts. This noble compassion, this intuitive knowledge of the difficulties of work, this worship for talent, is one of the rarest vagaries that ever beat its wings in a woman's soul. At first it is like a secret between her and God, for there is nothing dazzling in it, nothing to flatter her vanity—that potent auxiliary of all actions in France.

From this third phase of her ideas there was born in Modeste a violent desire to study one of these anomalous lives to the very heart of it, to know the springs of thought, the secret sorrows of genius, and what it craves, and what it is. And so, in her, the rashness of phantasy, the wanderings of her soul in a void, her excursions into the darkness of the future, the impatience of her undeveloped love to centre in an object, the nobleness of her notions of life, her determination to suffer in some lofty sphere rather than to paddle in the slough of provincial life as her mother had done, the vow she had made to herself never to go wrong, to respect her parents' home, and never bring to it anything but joy—

all this world of feeling at last took shape: Modeste purposed to be the wife of a poet, an artist; a man, in short, superior to the crowd; but she meant to choose him, and to subject him to a thorough study, before giving him her heart, her life, her immense tenderness freed from all the different trammels of passion.

She began by reveling in this pretty romance. Perfect tranquillity possessed her soul. Her countenance was gradually colored by it. She became the lovely and sublime image of Germany that you have seen, the glory of the chalet, the pride of Madame Latournelle and the Dumays. Thus Modeste lived a double life. She humbly and lovingly fulfilled all the trivial tasks of daily life at the chalet, using them as a check to hold in the poem of her ideal existence, like the Carthusians, who order their material life by rule, and occupy their time to allow the soul to develop itself in prayer.

All great intellects subject themselves to some mechanical employment to obtain control of thought. Spinoza ground lenses, Bayle counted the tiles in a roof, Montesquieu worked in his garden. The body being thus under control, the spirit spreads its wings in perfect security. So Madame Mignon, who read her daughter's soul, was right. Modeste was in love; she loved with that Platonic sentiment which is so rare, so little understood—the first illusion of girlhood, the subtlest of feelings, the heart's daintiest morsel. She drank deep draughts from the cup of the unknown, the impossible, the visionary. She delighted in the blue bird of the Maiden's Paradise, which sings far away, on which none may lay hands, which lets itself be seen, while the shot of no gun can ever touch it; its magical colors, like the sparkling of gems, dazzle the eye, but it is never more seen when once reality appears—the hideous Harpy bringing witnesses and the *maire* in her train. To have all the poetry of love without the presence of the lover! How exquisite an orgy! What a fair chimera of all colors and every plumage!

This was the trifling foolish accident which sealed the girl's fate.

Modeste saw on a bookseller's counter a lithographed portrait of de Canalis, one of her favorites. You know what libels these sketches are, the outcome of an odious kind of speculation which falls upon the persons of celebrated men, as if their faces were public property. So Canalis, caught in a Byronic attitude, offered to public admiration his disordered hair, his bare throat, and the excessively high forehead proper to every bard. Victor Hugo's brow will lead to as many heads being shaved as there were suckling field-marshals who rushed to die on the strength of Napoleon's glory.

Modeste was struck by this head, made sublime by commercial requirements; and on the day when she bought the portrait, one of the finest books by Arthès had just come out. Though it may sound to her discredit, it must be confessed that she long hesitated between the illustrious poet and the illustrious prose writer. But were these two great men unmarried? Modeste began by securing the co-operation of Françoise Cochet, the girl whom poor Bettina Caroline had taken with her from le Havre and brought back again. She lived in the town, and Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay would employ her for a day's work in preference to any other. Modeste had this somewhat homely creature up into her room; she swore that she would never cause her parents the smallest grief, nor exceed the limits imposed on a young lady; she promised Françoise that in the future, on her father's return, the poor girl should have an easy life, on condition of her keeping absolute secrecy as to the service required of her. What was it? A mere trifle, a perfectly innocent thing. All that Modeste asked of her accomplice was that she should post certain letters and fetch the replies, addressed to Françoise Cochet.

The bargain concluded, Modeste wrote a polite note to Dauriat, the publisher of Canalis' poems, in which she asked

him, in the interests of the great poet, whether Canalis was married, begging him to address the answer to Mademoiselle Françoise, poste restante, au Havre. Dauriat, who, of course, could not take such a letter seriously, sent a reply concocted in his private room by five or six journalists, each in turn adding his jest:

"MADEMOISELLE:—Canalis (Baron de), Constant-Cyr-Melchior, member of the French Academy, born in 1800 at Canalis, Corrèze; stands five feet four, is in good condition, vaccinated, thoroughbred, has served his term under the conscription, enjoys perfect health, has a small landed estate in Corrèze, and wishes to marry, but looks for great wealth.

"His arms are, party per pale gules a broad axe or, and sable a shell argent; surmounted by a baron's coronet; supporters, two larches proper. The motto *Or et fer* (gold and iron) has never proved auriferous.

"The first Canalis, who went to the Holy Land in the first crusade, is mentioned in the Chronicles of Auvergne as carrying no weapon but an axe, by reason of the complete indigence in which he lived, and which has ever since weighed on his posterity. Hence, no doubt, the blazon. The axe brought him nothing but an empty shell. This noble baron became famous, having discomfited many infidels, and he died at Jerusalem, without either gold or iron, as bare as a worm, on the road to Ascalon, the ambulance service having not yet been called into existence.

"The castle of Canalis—the land yields a few chestnuts—consists of two dismantled towers joined by a wall, remarkable for its superior growth of ivy, and it pays twenty-two francs to the revenue.

"The publisher, undersigned, begs to remark that he pays Monsieur de Canalis ten thousand francs per volume for his poetry. He does not give his empty shells for nothing.

"The Bard of the Corrèze lives at Rue de Paradis-Poisson-

nière, No. 29, which is a suitable situation for a poet of the Seraphic School. Worms (*les vers*) are a bait for gudgeon. Letters must be prepaid.

"Certain noble dames of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, often, it is said, make their way to paradise and patronize the divinity. King Charles X. thinks so highly of this great poet as to believe him capable of becoming a statesman. He has recently made him an officer of the Legion of Honor, and, what is more to the purpose, master of appeals, attached to the ministry for foreign affairs. These functions in no way keep the great man from drawing a pension of three thousand francs from the fund devoted to the encouragement of art and letters. This pecuniary success causes, in the publishing world, an eighth plague which Egypt was spared—a plague of worms (*les vers*)!

"The last edition of the works of Canalis, printed on hand-made paper, large 8vo, with vignettes by Bixiou, Joseph Bridau, Schinner, Sommervieux, and others, printed by Didot, is in five volumes, price nine francs, postpaid."

This letter fell like a paving-stone on a tulip. A poet as master of appeals, in the immediate circle of a minister, drawing a pension, aiming at the red rosette, adored of the ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain! Was this at all like the threadbare poet wandering on the quays, melancholy and dreamy, overwrought by work, and climbing up to his garret again loaded with poetic inspiration? At the same time, Modeste saw through the jest of the envious publisher, which conveyed, "I made Canalis! I made Nathan!" Then she re-read Canalis' verses, very catching verses, full of hypocrisy, and which require a few words of analysis if only to explain her infatuation.

Canalis is distinguished from Lamartine, the chief of the Seraphic School, by a sort of sick-nurse blarney, a perfidious sweetness, and exquisite correctness. If the chief, with his

sublime outcry, may be called an eagle, Canalis, all rose and white, is a flamingo. In him women discern the friend they yearn for, a discreet confidant, their interpreter, the being who understands them, and who explains them to themselves.

The broad margins with which Dauriat had graced his last edition were covered with confessions scribbled in pencil by Modeste, who sympathized with this dreamy and tender soul. Canalis has not life in his gift; he does not breathe it into his creations; but he knows how to soothe vague sufferings such as Modeste was a victim of. He speaks to girls in their own language, lulling the pain of the most recent wounds, and silencing groans and even sobs. His talent does not consist in preaching loftily to the sufferer, in giving her the medicine of strong emotions; he is content to say in a musical voice which commands belief: "I am unhappy, as you are; I understand you fully; come with me, we will weep together on the bank of this stream, under the willows!" And they go! and listen to his verse, as vacuous and as sonorous as the song of a nurse putting a baby to sleep! Canalis—like Nodier in this—bewitches you by an artlessness, which in the prose writer is natural but in the poet elaborately studied, by his archness, his smile, his fallen flowers, his childlike philosophy. He mimics the language of early days well enough to carry you back to the fair field of illusion.

To an eagle we are pitiless; we insist on the quality of the diamond, flawless perfection; but from Canalis we are satisfied with the orphan's mite; everything may be forgiven him. He seems such a good fellow, human above everything. These seraphic airs succeed with him, as those of a woman will always succeed if she acts simplicity well—the startled, youthful, martyred, suffering angel.

Modeste, summing up her impressions, felt that she trusted that soul, that countenance, as attractive as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's. She paid no heed to the publisher. And so, at the beginning of the month of August, she wrote the fol-

lowing letter to this Dorat of the sacristy, who even now is regarded as one of the stars of the modern Pleiades:

I.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"Many times ere now, monsieur, I have intended to write you—and why? You can guess: to tell you how much I delight in your talent. Yes, I feel a longing to express to you the admiration of a poor country-bred girl, very solitary in her nook, whose sole joy is in reading your poetry. From René I came to you. Melancholy tends to reverie. How many other women must have paid you the homage of their secret thoughts! What chance have I of being of the elect in such a crowd! What interest can this paper have, though full of my soul, above all the perfumed letters which beset you? I introduce myself with more to perplex you than any other woman. I intend to remain unknown, and yet ask your entire confidence, as if you had known me a long time.

"Answer me, be kind to me. I do not pledge myself to tell my name some day, still I do not positively say no. What more can I add to this letter? Regard it, monsieur, as a great effort, and allow me to offer you my hand—oh, a very friendly hand—that of your servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M.

"If you do me the favor of replying, address your letter, I beg, to Mademoiselle F. Cochet, Poste Restante, le Havre."

Now every damsel, whether romantic or not, can imagine Modeste's impatience during the next few days! The air was full of tongues of flame; the trees looked like plumage; she did not feel her body; she floated above nature! The

earth vanished under her tread. Wondering at the powers of the postoffice, she followed her little sheet of paper through space; she was glad, as we are glad at twenty at the first exercise of our will. She was bewitched, possessed, as people were in the middle ages. She pictured to herself the poet's lodgings, his room; she saw him opening the letter, and she made a million guesses.

Having sketched his poetry, it is necessary here to give an outline of the man. Canalis is small and thin, with an aristocratic figure; dark; gifted with a foolish face and a rather insignificant head, that of a man who has more vanity than pride. He loves luxury, display, and splendor. Fortune is a necessity to him more than to most other men. No less proud of his birth than of his talent, he has swamped his ancestors by too-great personal pretensions. After all, the Canalises are neither Navarreins, nor Cadignans, nor Grandlieus, nor Nègrepelisses; however, nature has done much to support his pretensions. He has the eyes of Oriental lustre that we look for in a poet, a very pretty refinement of manner, a thrilling voice; but a mannerism that is natural to him almost nullifies these advantages. He is an actor in perfect good faith. He displays a very elegant foot—it is an acquired habit. He has a declamatory style of talk, but it is his own. His affectation is theatrical, but it has become a second nature. These faults, as we must call them, are in harmony with an unfailing generosity, which may be termed carpet-knightliness in contrast to chivalry. Canalis has not faith enough to be a Don Quixote, but he is too high-minded not to take invariably the nobler side in any question. His poetry, which comes out in a miliary eruption on every possible occasion, is a great disadvantage to the poet, who is not indeed lacking in wit, but whose talent hinders his wit from developing. He is the slave of his reputation; he aims at seeming superior to it.

Hence, as frequently happens, the man is completely out

of tune with the products of his mind. The author of these insinuating, artless poems, full of tender sentiment, of these calm verses as clear as lake-ice, of this caressing womanish poetry, is an ambitious little man, buttoned tightly into his coat, with the air of a diplomat, dreaming of political influence, stinking of the aristocrat, scented and conceited, thirsting for a fortune that he may have an income equal to his ambitions, and already spoiled by success under two aspects —the crown of bays and the crown of myrtle. A salary of eight thousand francs, a pension of three thousand, two thousand from the Académie, a thousand crowns of inherited income—a good deal reduced by the agricultural requirements of the Canalis estate, and the ten thousand francs he gets from his poems one year with another—twenty-five thousand francs a year in all.

To Modeste's hero this income was all the more precarious because he spent, on an average, five or six thousand francs a year more than he received, but hitherto the King's privy purse and the secret funds of the ministry had made up the deficit. He had composed a hymn for the coronation, for which he had been rewarded with a service of plate; he refused a sum of money, saying that the Canalises owed their homage to the King of France. The cavalier King smiled, and ordered from Odiot a costly version of the well-known lines from "Zaïre:"

> "What! Rhymester, did you ever hope to vie
> With Charles the Tenth in generosity?"

Canalis had drained himself dry, to use a picturesque vulgarism; he knew that he was incapable of inventing a fresh form of poetry; his lyre has not seven strings, it has but one; and so long had he played on it that the public left him now no choice but to use it to hang himself, or be silent. De Marsay, who could not endure Canalis, had uttered a sarcasm

of which the poisoned dart had pierced the poet's conceit to the quick.

"Canalis," he had said, "strikes me as being just like the man of whom Frederick the Great spoke after a battle, as the trumpeter who had never ceased blowing the same note through his penny pipe!"

Canalis was anxious to become a political personage, and as a beginning made capital of a journey he had taken to Madrid when the Duc de Chaulieu was ambassador, accompanying him as *attaché*—but to the Duchess, as the jest went in fashionable drawing-rooms. How often has a jest sealed a man's fate! Colla, the erewhile President of the Cisalpine Republic, and the greatest advocate in Piémont, is told by a friend, at the age of forty, that he knows nothing of botany; he is nettled, he becomes a Jussieu, cultivates flowers, invents new ones, and publishes, in Latin, the "Flora of Piémont," the work of ten years!

"Well, after all, Canning and Chateaubriand were statesmen," said the extinguished poet, "and in me de Marsay shall find his master!"

Canalis would have liked to write an important political work; but he was afraid of getting into trouble with French prose, a cruelly exacting medium to those who have acquired the habit of taking four Alexandrine lines to express one idea. Of all the poets of the day, only three—Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, and de Vigny—have been able to conquer the double glory of a poet and a prose-writer, which was also achieved by Voltaire, Molière, and Rabelais. It is one of the rarest triumphs in French literature, and distinguishes a poet far above his fellows. Our poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was therefore very wise to try to find shelter for his chariot under the guardian roof of a government office.

When he was made master of appeals, he felt the need of a secretary, a friend who might fill his place on many occasions, cook his affairs with publishers, see to his fame in the

newspapers, and, at a pinch, support him in politics—in short, who would be his satellite. Several men, famous in art, science, or letters, have one or two such followers in Paris, a captain in the Guards, or a court chamberlain, who live in the beams of their sunshine, a sort of aides-de-camp intrusted with delicate tasks, allowing themselves to be compromised at need, working round the idol's pedestal, not quite his equals, not quite his superiors; men bold in puffery, the first in every breach, covering his retreats, looking after his business, and devoted to him so long as their illusions last or till their claims are satisfied. Some at last perceive that their Great Man is ungrateful; others feel that they are being made use of; many weary of the work; and few indeed are satisfied by the mild interchange of sentiment, the only reward to be looked for from an intimacy with a superior man, and which satisfied Ali, raised by Mahomet to his own level. Many, deluded by their self-conceit, think themselves as clever as their Great Man. Devotion is rare, especially without reward and without hope, as Modeste conceived of it.

Nevertheless, a Menneval is occasionally to be met with; and, in Paris more than anywhere, men love to live in the shade and to work in silence, Benedictines who have lost their way in a world which has no monastery for them. These valiant lambs bear in their deeds and in their private lives the poetry which writers put into words. They are poets at heart, in their secluded meditations, in their tenderness, as others are poets on paper, in the fields of intellect, and at so much a verse, like Lord Byron—like all those who live, alas! by ink, which in these days is the water of Hippocrene, for which the government is to blame.

It was a young consulting referendary of the court of exchequer who constituted himself the poet's secretary; he was attracted by the poet's fame, and the future prospects of this vaunted political genius, and led by the advice of Madame d'Espard, who thus played the Duchesse de Chaulieu's cards

for her; and Canalis made much of him, as a speculator does of his first shareholder. The beginnings of this alliance had quite an air of friendship. The younger man had already gone through a course of the same kind with one of the ministers who fell in 1827; but the minister had taken care to find him a place in the exchequer.

Ernest de la Brière, at that time seven-and-twenty, decorated with the Legion of Honor, with nothing in the world but the emoluments of his office, had the habit of business, and, after hanging about the private room of the prime minister for four years, he knew a good deal. He was gentle, amiable, with an almost maidenly soul, full of good feeling, and he hated to be seen in the foreground. He loved his country, he yearned to be of use, but brilliancy dazzled him. If he had had his choice, the place of secretary to a Napoleon would have been more to his mind than that of prime minister.

Ernest, having become the friend of Canalis, did great things for him, but in eighteen months he became aware of the shallowness of a nature which was poetical merely in its literary expression. The truth of the homely proverb, "The cowl does not make the monk," is especially applicable in literature. It is most rare to find a talent and character in harmony. A man's faculties are not the sum-total of a man. This discord, of which the manifestations are startling, is the outcome of an unexplored—a perhaps unexplorable—mystery. The brain and its products of every kind—since in the arts the hand of man carries out his brain—form a world apart that flourishes under the skull, perfectly independent of the feelings, of what are called the virtues of a citizen, of the head of a family, of a private householder. And yet this is not final; nothing in man is final. It is certain that a debauchée will exhaust his talent in orgies, and a drunkard drown it in his libations, while a good man can never acquire talent by wholesome decency; but it is also almost proved that

Virgil, the poet of love, never loved a Dido; and that Rousseau, the pattern citizen, had pride enough to furnish forth a whole aristocracy. Nevertheless, Michael Angelo and Raphael showed the happy concord of talent and character. Hence talent is in men, as far as the individual is concerned, what beauty is in women—a promise. Let us give twofold admiration to the man whose heart and character are equally perfect with his talent.

Ernest, when he detected under the poet an ambitious egoist—the worst species of egoist, for some are amiable—felt a singular diffidence about leaving him. Honest souls do not easily break their bonds, especially those they have voluntarily accepted. The secretary, then, was on very good terms with the poet when Modeste's letter was flying through the mail, but on the good terms of constant self-effacement. La Brière felt he owed Canalis something for the frankness with which he had revealed himself. And indeed, in this man, who will be accounted great so long as he lives, and made much of, like Marmontel, his defects are the seamy side of brilliant qualities. But for his vanity, his pretentious conceit, he might not have been gifted with that sonorous verbiage which is a necessary instrument in the political life of the day. His shallowness is part of his rectitude and loyalty; his ostentation is paired with liberality. Society profits by the results; the motives may be left to God.

Still, when Modeste's letter arrived, Ernest had no illusions left as to Canalis. The two friends had just breakfasted and were chatting in the poet's study; he was at that time living in first-floor rooms looking out on a garden, beyond a court-yard.

"Ah!" cried Canalis, "I was saying the other day to Madame de Chaulieu that I must cast forth some new poem; admiration is running low, for it is some time since I have had any anonymous letters——"

"An unknown lady?"

"Unknown! A d'Este, and from le Havre! It is evidently an assumed name!"

And Canalis handed the letter to la Brière. This poem, this veiled enthusiasm—in short, Modeste's very heart—was recklessly exposed by the gesture of a coxcomb.

"It is a grand thing," said the young accountant, "thus to attract the chastest feelings, to compel a helpless woman to shake off the habits forced upon her by education, by nature, by society, to break through conventionalities—— What privileges genius commands! A letter like this in my hand, written by a girl, a genuine girl, without reservation, with enthusiasm——"

"Well?" said Canalis.

"Well, if you had suffered as much as Tasso, you ought to find it reward enough!" exclaimed la Brière.

"So we tell ourselves at the first or at the second letter," said Canalis. "But at the thirtieth!—— but when we have discovered that the young enthusiast is an old hand! but when at the end of the radiant path traveled over by the poet's imagination we have seen some English old maid sitting on a milestone and holding out her hand! but when the angel, by post, turns into a poor creature, moderately good-looking, in search of a husband!—— Well, then, the effervescence subsides."

"I am beginning to think," said la Brière, smiling, "that glory has something poisonous in it, like certain gorgeous flowers."

"Beside, my dear fellow," Canalis went on, "all these women, even when they are sincere, have an ideal to which we rarely correspond. They never tell themselves that a poet is a man, and a tolerably vain one, as I am accused of being; it never occurs to them that he is rough-ridden by a sort of feverish excitement which makes him disagreeable and uncertain. They want him to be always great, always splendid; they never dream that talent is a disease; that Nathan

lives on Florine; that d'Arthez is too fat; that Joseph Bridau is too thin; that Béranger can go on foot; that the divinity may foam at the mouth. A Lucien de Rubempré, a verse-writer and a pretty fellow, is a phœnix. So why go out of your way to receive bad compliments and sit under the cold shower-bath of a disillusioned woman's helpless stare?"

"Then the true poet," said la Brière, "ought to remain hidden, like God, in the centre of his universe, and be visible only in his creations!"

"Then glory would be too dearly paid for," replied Canalis. "There is some good in life, I tell you," said he, taking a cup of tea. "When a woman of birth and beauty loves a poet, she does not hide herself in the gallery or the stage-box of a theatre, like a duchess smitten by an actor; she feels strong enough and sufficiently protected by her beauty, by her fortune, by her name, to say, as in every epic poem, 'I am the nymph Calypso, and I love Telemachus.' Mystification is the resource of small minds. For some time now I have never answered such masqueraders——"

"Oh! how I could love a woman who had come to me!" cried la Brière, restraining a tear. "It may be said in reply, my dear Canalis, that it is never a poor creature that rises to the level of a celebrated man; she is too suspicious, too vain, too much afraid. It is always a star, a——"

"A princess," said Canalis, with a shout of laughter, "who condescends to him, I suppose? My dear fellow, such things happen once in a century. Such a passion is like the plant that flowers once in a hundred years. Princesses who are young, rich, and handsome have too much else to do; they are enclosed, like all rare plants, within a hedge of silly men, well-born and well-bred, and as empty as an alder-stem. My dream, alas! the crystal of my dream hung with garlands of flowers all the way hither from la Corrèze, and with what fervor! But no more of that!—it is in fragments, at my feet, long since. No, no, every anonymous

letter is a beggar! And what demands they make. Write to this young person, assuming her to be young and pretty, and you will see! You will have your hands full. One cannot, in reason, love every woman. Apollo, or, at any rate, the Apollo Belvedere, is a consumptive dandy who must save his strength."

"But when a woman comes to you like this," argued Ernest, "her excuse must lie in her certainty that she can eclipse the most adored mistress in tenderness, in beauty—and then a little curiosity——"

"Ah!" said Canalis, "my too youthful Ernest, you must allow me to be faithful to the fair Duchess, who is all my joy!"

"You are right—too right," replied Ernest.

Nevertheless, the young secretary read and re-read Modeste's letter, trying to guess the mind behind it.

"But there is nothing extravagant in it, no appeal to your genius, only to your heart," he said to Canalis. "This perfume of modesty and the exchange proposed would tempt me——"

"Sign it yourself; answer her, and follow up the adventure to the end; it is a poor bargain that I offer you," exclaimed Canalis, with a smile. "Go on; you will have something to tell me in three months' time, if it lasts three months."

Four days after Modeste received the following letter, written on handsome paper, under a double cover, and sealed with the arms of Canalis:

II.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"MADEMOISELLE:—Admiration for great works—admitting that mine may be great—implies a certain holy simplicity which is a defense against irony and a justification, in the eyes of every tribunal, of the step you have taken in writing

me. Above all, I must thank you for the pleasure which such a testimonial never fails to give, even when undeserved, for the writer of verse and the poet alike secretly believe themselves worthy of them, self-love is a form of matter so far from repellent of praise. The best proof of friendship that I can give to an unknown lady in return for this balm, which heals the stings of criticism, is surely to share with her the harvest of my experience, at the risk of scaring away her living illusions.

"Mademoiselle, the noblest palm a young girl can bear is that of a saintly, pure, and blameless life. Are you alone in the world? That is a sufficient answer. But if you have a family, a father, or a mother, consider all the sorrows that a letter like yours may entail—written to a poet whom you do not know. Not every writer is an angel; they have their faults. Some are fickle, reckless, conceited, ambitious, dissipated; and imposing as innocence must be, chivalrous as a French poet may be, you might find more than one degenerate bard willing to encourage your affection only to betray it. Then your letter would not be interpreted as I read it. He would find a meaning in it which you have not put there, and which in your innocence you do not even suspect. Many authors, many natures!

"I am extremely flattered by your having thought me worthy to understand you; but if you had addressed yourself to an insincere talent, to a cynic whose writings were melancholy while his life was a continual carnival, you might have found at the end of your sublime imprudence some bad man, a dangler behind the scenes, or a wine-shop hero! You, under the arbor of clematis where you dream over poetry, cannot smell the stale cigar smoke which depoetizes the manuscript; just as when you go to a ball, dressed in the dazzling products of the jeweler's skill, you never think of the sinewy arms, the toilers in their shirt-sleeves, the wretched workshops whence spring these radiant flowers of handicraft.

"Go further. What is there in the solitary life of reverie that you lead—by the seashore, no doubt—to interest a poet whose task it is to divine everything, since he must describe everything? Our young girls here are so highly accomplished that no daughter of Eve can vie with them! What reality was ever so good as a dream? And you now, you, a young girl brought up to be the duteous mother of a family, what would you gain by an initiation into the terrible excitement of a poet's life in this appalling capital, to be defined only as a hell we love.

"If you took up your pen, prompted by the wish to enliven your monotonous existence as an inquisitive girl, has not this a semblance of depravity? What meaning am I to attribute to your letter? Are you one of a caste of reprobates, seeking a friend at a distance? Are you cursed with ugliness, and do you feel you have a noble soul with none to trust? Alas!—a sad conclusion—you have either gone too far or not far enough. Either let it end here, or, if you persist, tell me more than in the letter you have already written.

"But, mademoiselle, if you are young, if you have a family, if you feel that you bear in your heart a heavenly spikenard, to be shed, as the Magdalen shed hers on Christ's feet, suffer yourself to be appreciated by some man who is worthy of you, and become what every good girl should attain—an admirable wife, the virtuous mother of children. A poet is the poorest conquest any young woman can aspire to; he has too much vanity, too many salient angles which must run counter to the legitimate vanity of a wife, and bruise the tenderness which has no experience of life. The poet's wife should love him for long before marrying him; she must resign herself to be as charitable and as indulgent as the angels, to all the virtues of motherhood. These qualities, mademoiselle, exist only as a germ in a young girl.

"Listen to the whole truth; do I not owe it you in return for your intoxicating flattery? Though it may be glorious to

marry a great celebrity, a woman soon discovers that a man, however superior, is but a man like all others. He then the less fulfills her hopes, because miracles are expected of him. A famous poet is then in the predicament of a woman whose overpraised beauty makes us say, 'I had pictured her as handsomer;' she does not answer to the requirements of the portrait sketched by the same fairy to whom I owe your letter—Imagination!

"Again, great qualities of mind develop and flourish only in an invisible sphere; the poet's wife sees only the unpleasant side of it; she sees the jewels made instead of wearing them. If the brilliancy of an exceptional position is what fascinates you, I warn you, its pleasures are soon exhausted. You would be provoked to find so much that is rough in a situation which from afar looks so smooth, so much ice on a glittering height! And then, as women never have set foot in the world of difficulty, they presently cease to value what they once admired, when they fancy that they have understood the workmanship at a glance.

"I will conclude with a last reflection, which you will do wrong to mis-read as an entreaty in disguise; it is the advice of a friend. A communion of souls cannot be complete excepting between two persons who are prepared to conceal nothing. Could you show yourself as you really are to a stranger? I pause before the consequences of such a notion.

"Accept, mademoiselle, all the respect we owe to every woman, even to those who are unknown, and who wear a mask."

To think that she had carried this letter between her skin and her stays, under the scorching busk, for a whole day!—— that she had postponed reading it till an hour when everybody was asleep, till midnight, after waiting for the solemn hour in the pangs of a fiery imagination!—— that she had blessed the poet, had read in fancy a thousand letters, had

conceived of everything excepting this drop of cold water shed on the most diaphanous visions of fancy, and destroying them as prussic acid destroys life. It was enough to make her hide her face—as Modeste did—under her sheets, though she was alone, and put out the candle, and weep.

All this happened in the early days of July. Modeste presently got up, paced her room, and then opened the window. She wanted air. The scent of flowers came up to her with the peculiar freshness of night-perfumes. The sea, lighted up by the moon, twinkled like a mirror. A nightingale was singing in the Vilquins' park.

"Ah! there is the poet!" said Modeste to herself, her anger dying out.

The bitterest reflections crowded on her mind. She was stung to the quick; she wanted to read the letter again. She re-lighted the candle, and studied this careful production, till at last she heard the early voices of real life.

"He is in the right, and I am in the wrong," thought she. "But how could I expect to find one of Molière's old men under the star-spangled robe of a poet?"

When a woman or a girl is caught red-handed, she feels intense hatred of the witness, the first cause, or the object of her folly. And so Modeste, genuine, natural, and coy, felt her heart swell with a dreadful longing to trample on this essence of rectitude and throw him into some abyss of contradiction, anything she could devise to pay him back this stunning blow.

The pure-hearted child, whose head alone had been corrupted by her reading, by her sister's long agony, and by the perilous meditations of her solitude, was roused by a sunbeam falling on her face. She had lain for three hours tacking about on the immense ocean of doubt. Such nights are never forgotten.

Modeste went at once to her little lacquer table, her father's gift, and wrote a letter dictated by the infernal spirit of re-

venge which disports itself at the bottom of a young girl's heart:

III.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"MONSIEUR:—You are certainly a great poet, but you are something better—an honest man. After showing so much frank loyalty to a young girl on the verge of an abyss, have you enough to reply without the least hypocrisy or evasion to this question—

"Would you have written the letter I have received in answer to mine—would your ideas, your language, have been the same if some one had whispered in your ear, what may be true: 'Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M. has six millions of francs, and does not want to have a simpleton for her master?'

"For one moment admit this hypothesis for a fact. Be as honest with me as with yourself; fear nothing, I am superior to my twenty years; nothing that is genuine can injure you in my estimation. When I shall have read that confession, if, indeed, you vouchsafe to make it to me, you shall have an answer to your first letter.

"After admiring your talent, which is often sublime, allow me to do homage to your delicacy and rectitude, which compel me to sign myself

"Your humble servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

When this note was placed in la Brière's hands, he went out to walk on the boulevards, tossed in his soul like a light bark in the tempest when the wind blows every minute from a different point of the compass. One of the young men of whom we meet so many—a true Parisian—would have summed up the case in these words, "An old hand!" But to a young

fellow whose soul is lofty and refined, this sort of implied oath, this appeal to veracity, had the power to arouse the three judges that lurk at the bottom of every conscience. And Honor, Truth, and Justice, rising erect, as it were, thus cried aloud.

"Ah! my dear Ernest," said Truth, "you certainly would not have written a lecture to a rich heiress. No, no, my boy, you would have set off, nose on, for le Havre, to find out whether the young lady was handsome, and you would have been much aggrieved by the preference given to genius. And if you only could have tripped your friend up, and have made yourself acceptable in his place, Mademoiselle d'Este would have been divine!" "What," said Justice, "you pity yourselves, you men of brains or wit, and without cash, when you see rich girls married to men whom you would not employ as porters; you run amuck against the sordidness of the age, which is eager to wed money with money, and never to unite some fine young fellow full of talent to a rich and high-born beauty; now here is one who rebels against the spirit of the time, and the poet retorts with a blow on the heart!" "Rich or poor, young or old, handsome or plain, this girl is in the right, she has brains, she casts the poet into the mire of self-interest," cried Honor. "She deserves a sincere, noble, and honest reply; and, above all, the true expression of your thought! Examine yourself. Sound your heart, and purge it of its meanness! What would Molière's Alceste say?" And la Brière, starting from the Boulevard Poissonnière, lost in meditation, walked so slowly that at the end of an hour he had but just reached the Boulevard des Capucines. He returned by the quays to the exchequer, at that time situated near the Sainte-Chapelle. Instead of verifying accounts, he sat under the spell of his perplexities.

"She has not six millions, that is clear," said he to himself; "but that is not the question——"

Six days later Modeste received the following letter:

IV.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"MADEMOISELLE :—You are not a d'Este. That is an assumed name to conceal your own. Are such revelations as you request due to a person who is false as to her identity? Attend ; I will answer your question by asking another, Are you of illustrious parentage? of noble birth? of a family of townsfolk?

"Morality indeed cannot change ; it is one ; but its obligations vary in different spheres. As the sun sheds a different light on different aspects, producing the variety we admire, morality makes social duty conform to rank and position. What is a peccadillo in the soldier is a crime in the general, and *vice versâ*. The proprieties are not the same for a peasant-girl who reaps the field, for a workwoman at fifteen sous a day, for the daughter of a small shopkeeper, for a young girl of the middle class, for the child of a rich commercial house, for the heiress of a noble family, for a daughter of the race of Este. A king must not stoop to pick up a gold coin, and a workman must turn back to look for a piece of ten sous he has dropped, though both alike ought to observe the laws of economy. A d'Este owning six millions of francs may wear a broad-brimmed hat and feathers, flourish a riding whip, mount an Arab horse, and come as an Amazon in gold lace, followed by a groom, to say to a poet, 'I love poetry, and I desire to expiate the wrongs done by Leonora to Tasso,' while the daughter of a merchant would be simply ridiculous in imitating her.

"To what social class do you belong? Answer truly, and I will as truly reply to the question you ask me.

"Not being so happy as to know you, though already bound to you by a sort of poetical communion, I do not like

to offer you any vulgar homage. It is already a triumph of mischief for you perhaps to have perplexed a man whose books are published."

The young accountant was not lacking in the skill of fence which a man of honor may allow himself. By return of post he received this reply:

V.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"You are more and more cautious, my dear poet. My father is a count. The most distinguished member of our family was a cardinal, in the days when cardinals were the equals of kings. At the present day our race, almost extinct, ends in me; but I have the necessary quarterings to admit me to any court or any chapter. In short, we are a match for the Canalises. Excuse my not forwarding our coat-of-arms.

"Try to write as sincerely as I do. I await your reply to know whether I may still subscribe myself, as now,

"Your servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

"What advantage the young person takes of her position!" exclaimed la Brière. "But is she truthful?"

It is not for nothing that a man has been for four years a minister's private secretary; that he has lived in Paris and watched its intrigues; and the purest soul is always more or less intoxicated by the heady atmosphere of the Empress City. La Brière, rejoicing that he was not Canalis, secured a place in the mail-coach for le Havre, after writing a letter in which he promised a reply by a certain day, excusing the delay by the importance of the confession required of him and the business of his office. He took the precaution of obtaining

from the director-general of the mails a line enjoining silence and compliance on the head of the office at le Havre. He could thus wait to see Françoise Cochet arrive at the office, and quietly follow her home. Guided by her, he mounted the hill of Ingouville, and saw Modeste Mignon at the window of the chalet.

"Well, Françoise?" asked the girl.

"Yes, mademoiselle, I have one."

Ernest, struck by this celestially fair type of beauty, turned on his heel, and inquired of a passer-by the name of the owner of that splendid residence.

"That?" asked the native, pointing to the great house.

"Yes, my good fellow."

"Oh, that belongs to Monsieur Vilquin, the richest ship-owner of the place, a man who does not know how much he has."

"I know of no Cardinal Vilquin in history," said the accountant to himself, as he went down the town again, to return to Paris.

Of course, he questioned the postmaster as to the Vilquin family. He learned that the Vilquins owned an immense fortune; that Monsieur Vilquin had a son and two daughters, one of them married to young Monsieur Althor. Prudence saved la Brière from showing any adverse interest in the Vilquins; the postmaster was already looking at him with suspicion.

"Is there no one at the house just now beside the family?" he asked.

"Just at present the Hérouville family is there. There is some talk of a marriage between the young Duke and the second Mademoiselle Vilquin."

"There was a famous Cardinal d'Hérouville," thought la Brière, "in the time of the Valois; and, under Henry IV., the terrible marshal, who was created duke."

Ernest returned, having seen enough of Modeste to dream

of her; to believe that, rich or poor, if she had a noble soul, he would gladly and unhesitatingly make her Madame la Brière, and he, therefore, determined to still carry on the correspondence.

Do your utmost, hapless Frenchwomen, to remain unknown, to weave the very least little romance in the midst of civilization which takes note on public squares of the hour when every hackney cab comes and goes, which counts every letter and stamps them twice at the exact hours when they are posted and when they are delivered, which numbers the houses, which registers each floor on the schedule of taxes, after making a list of the windows and doors, which ere long will have every acre of land, down to the smallest holdings and its most trifling details, laid down on the broad sheets of a survey—a giant's task, by command of a giant! Try, rash maidens, to evade—not, indeed, the eye of the police, but the ceaseless gossip which, in the poorest hamlet, scrutinizes your most trivial acts, counts the dishes at the préfet's dessert, and sees the melon-rind outside the door of the small annuitant, which tries to hear the chink of gold when Economy adds it to her treasury, and every evening, over the fire, sums up the incomes of the village, of the town, of the department!

Modeste, by a commonplace mistake, had escaped the most innocent espionage, for which Ernest already blamed himself. But what Parisian could endure to be the dupe of a little country girl? Never be duped! This odious maxim is a solvent for all man's noble sentiments. From the letter he wrote, where every lash of the scourge of conscience has left its mark, the reader may easily imagine the conflict of feelings to which the honest youth was a prey.

A few days later, Modeste, sitting at her window on a fine summer day, read the following pages:

VI.

To Mademoiselle O. d' Este-M.

"MADEMOISELLE:—Without hypocrisy, yes, if I had been sure that you had an immense fortune, I should have acted quite differently. Why? I have sought the reason, and it is this: There is in us an inborn feeling, developed, too, to an extreme by society, which urges us to seek and to seize happiness. Most men confound happiness with the means to happiness, and in their eyes fortune is its chief element. I should therefore have endeavored to please you, spurred by the social instinct that has in all ages made wealth a religion. At least, I think so. The wisdom which substitutes good sense for impulse is not to be looked for in a man who is still young; and when the prey is in sight, the animal instinct lurking in the heart of man urges him on. Thus, instead of a lecture, I should have sent you compliments and flattery.

"Should I have respected myself? I doubt it. Mademoiselle, in such a case, success brings absolution; but as to happiness, that is another matter. Should I not distrust my wife if I won her thus? Most certainly. Your action would, sooner or later, have resumed its true character; your husband, however great you might deem him, would at last have reproached you for having humiliated him; and you, sooner or later, might have learned to despise him. An ordinary man cuts the gordian knot of a marriage for money with the sword of tyranny. A strong man forgives. The poet bewails himself. This, mademoiselle, is the answer given by my honesty.

"Now, attend to me well. Yours is the triumph of having made me reflect deeply, both on you, whom I know not enough, and on myself, whom I know but little. You have had the skill to stir up the evil thoughts that grovel at the

bottom of every heart; but in me the outcome has been a generous something, and I hail you with my most grateful blessings, as, at sea, we hail a lighthouse warning us of rocks where we might have been wrecked.

"And now for my confession, for I would not lose your esteem nor my own for the price of all the treasures on earth. I was bent on knowing who you were. I have just come back from le Havre, where I saw Françoise Cochet, followed her to Ingouville, and saw you in your magnificent villa. You are as lovely as a poet's dream of woman; but I know not whether you are Mademoiselle Vilquin hidden under Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, or Mademoiselle d'Hérouville hidden under Mademoiselle Vilquin. Though all is fair in war, I blush at playing the spy, and I paused in my investigations. You piqued my curiosity; owe me no grudge for having been so womanly, is it not a poet's privilege? Now I have opened my heart to you; I have let you read it; you may believe in the sincerity of what I am about to add. Brief as was the glimpse I had of you, it was enough to modify my opinion. You are a poet and a poem even before being a woman. Yes, there is in you something more precious than beauty; you are the ideal of art, of fancy.

"The step you took, blamable in a young girl fated to a commonplace existence, is different in one gifted with such a character as I suppose you to have. Among the vast number of beings flung by chance into social life to make up a generation, there are exceptions. If your letter is the outcome of long political musing on the lot which the law reserves for women; if, carried away by the vocation of a superior and cultivated mind, you have wished to know something of the intimate life of a man to whom you concede the chance endowment of genius, in order to create a friendship with a soul akin to your own, exempt from vulgar conditions, and evading all the limitations of your sex—you are, indeed, an exception! The law which is good to measure the actions

of the crowd is then very narrow to qualify your determination. But then the words of my first letter recur in all their meaning, 'You have done too much or not enough.'

"Once more accept my thanks for the service you have done me in compelling me to probe my heart; for you have cured me of the error, common enough in France, of regarding marriage as a means to fortune. In the midst of the disturbance of my conscience a sacred voice has spoken. I have solemnly sworn to myself to make my own fortune, that my choice of a wife may never be determined by mercenary motives. Finally, I have blamed and repressed the unbecoming curiosity you aroused in me. You have not six millions. It would be impossible at le Havre that a young lady possessed of such a fortune should remain unknown, and you would have been betrayed by the pack of those aristocratic families which I see in pursuit of heiresses here in Paris, and which has sent the King's chief equerry on a visit to your Vilquins. So the sentiments I express are put forward as a positive rule, apart from all romance or statement of fact.

"Now, prove to me that you have one of those souls which we allow to disobey the common law, and you will grant in your mind that this second letter is in the right as well as the first. You are destined to a middle-class life; obey the iron law that holds society together. You are a superior woman, and I admire you; but if you are bent on yielding to the instinct you ought to repress, I pity you; these are the conditions of the social state. The admirable moral of the domestic epic 'Clarissa Harlowe' is that the victim's love, though legitimate and sincere, leads to her ruin, because it has its rise and progress in defiance of her family. The family, silly and cruel as it is, is in its rights as against Lovelace. The family is society.

"Believe me, for a girl, as for a wife, her glory will always consist in restraining her ardent whims within the strictest

limits of propriety. If I had a daughter who might become a Madame de Staël, I would wish that she might die at fifteen. Can you think, without the acutest regret, of your own child exhibited on the stage of celebrity and parading to win the applause of the mob? However high a woman may have raised herself in the secret poetry of her dreams, she must sacrifice her superiority on the altar of family life. Her soaring moods, her genius, her aspirations toward the lofty and the sublime, all the poem of a girl's soul belongs to the man she accepts, the children she may bear. I discern in you a secret ambition to enlarge the narrow circle of life to which every woman is condemned, and to bring passion and love into your marriage. Ah! it is a beautiful dream; it is not impossible; it is difficult; but it has been realized to bring incompatible souls—forgive me a word which has become ridiculous—to desperation.

"If you look for a sort of Platonic regard, it can only lead you to despair in the future. If your letter was a sport, play no more. And so this little romance ends, does it not? It will not have been altogether barren of fruit; my honesty has taken up arms; and you, on your part, have learned something certain about social life. Turn your gaze on real life, and throw the transient enthusiasm to which literature has given birth into the virtues of your sex. Farewell, mademoiselle; do me the honor of granting me your esteem. Since seeing you—or her whom I believe to be you—your letter has seemed to me quite natural; so fair a flower would instinctively turn toward the sun of poetry. So love poetry still, as you doubtless love flowers and music, the sumptuous grandeur of the sea, the beauties of Nature—all as ornaments of the soul; but remember all I have had the honor of telling you about poets. Be sure you do not marry an ass; seek with care for the mate God has created for you. There are, take my word for it, many clever men capable of appreciating you and of making you happy. If I were rich, and you were

poor, I would some day lay my fortune and my heart at your feet, for I surely believe that you have a soul full of riches and of loyalty; and I would intrust you with my life and honor in the fullest confidence. Once more farewell, fair daughter of fair Eve."

On reading this letter—at one gulp, like a drink of cold water in a desert—the mountain weighing on Modeste's heart was lifted; then, perceiving the mistakes she had made in carrying out her scheme, she corrected them at once by making some wrappers for Françoise, on which she wrote her own address at Ingouville, desiring her to come no more to the chalet. Thenceforth Françoise was to go home, place each letter as it came from Paris in one of these wrappers, and privily repost it in the town. Modeste promised herself always to meet the postman, standing at the front door at the hour when he should pass.

As to the feelings excited in Modeste by this reply, in which poor la Brière's noble heart throbbed under the brilliant mask of Canalis, they were as infinite as the waves which rolled up to die one after another on the shore, while, with her eyes fixed on the ocean, she gave herself up to the joy of having harpooned an angel's soul, so to speak, in the sea of Paris, of having discerned that in a really superior man the heart may sometimes be on a par with genius, and of having been well advised by the voice of presentiment. A mastering interest would henceforth inspire her life. The enclosure of her pretty home, the wires of her cage were broken. Thought could soar on widespread wings.

"Oh, dear father," she cried, looking across to the horizon, "make us very rich!"

Her answer, which Ernest de la Brière read five days later, will tell more than any comments can the feelings of her mind at this time:

VII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"My Friend:—Let me call you so—you have enchanted me, and I would not have you other than you are in this letter—the first; oh, let it not be the last! Who but a poet could ever have so perfectly excused and understood a girl?

"I wish to speak to you with the same sincerity as that which dictated the opening lines of your letter.

"In the first place, happily, you do not know me. I can tell you, gladly, that I am neither that frightful Mademoiselle Vilquin nor that most noble and most faded Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, who hovers between thirty and fifty, and cannot make up her mind to a creditable age. Cardinal d'Hérouville flourished in church history before the cardinal who is our only pride, for I do not count lieutenant-generals, or abbés who write small volumes of too big verse, as celebrities.

"Also, I do not live in the Vilquins' gorgeous villa; thank God, not the millionth part of a drop of their blood, chilled in many a counting-house, flows in my veins. I am by birth partly German, partly a child of Southern France; in my brain lurks Teutonic sentiment, and in my blood the energy of the Provençal. I am of noble birth both on my father's and my mother's side; through my mother I have connections on every page of the 'Almanach de Gotha.' But I have taken every precaution; it is not in the power of any man, not even of the police, to lift my disguise. I shall remain shrouded, unknown. As to myself and my belongings, *mes propres*, as they say in Normandy, be quite easy; I am at least as good-looking as the little person—happy, though she knows it not—on whom your eyes fell; and I do not think myself a pauper, though I am not attended in my walks by ten sons of peers! I have even seen the contemptible

farce played in my behoof of the heiress adored for her millions.

"Finally, make no attempt to find me, not even to win a bet. Alas! though free, I am guarded; in the first place, by myself, and then by brave folk, who would not hesitate to stick a knife in your heart if you tried to penetrate this retreat. I say this, not to incite your courage or your curiosity; I believe no such sentiments are needed to arouse your interest in me or to secure your attachment.

"I now proceed to reply to the second and greatly enlarged edition of your sermon:

"Shall I make a confession? When I found you so suspicious, taking me for a Corinne—how her improvisations have bored me!—I said to myself that many a tenth Muse had, ere now, led you by the tow-line of curiosity into her inmost vales, and proposed to you to taste the fruits of her school-girl Parnassus. Be quite easy, my friend; though I love poetry, I have no copies of verses in my blotting-book; my stockings are, and will remain, perfectly white. You will not be bored by any 'trifles' in one or two volumes. In short, if I should ever say to you, 'Come,' you know now that you will not find an old maid, ugly and penniless——

"Oh! my friend, if you could only know how much I regret that you should have come to le Havre! You have altered the aspect of what you call my romance. God alone can weigh in His Almighty hands the treasure I had in store for a man great enough, confiding and clear-sighted enough, to set out on the strength of my letters, after having made his way step by step through all the recesses of my heart, and to come to our first meeting with the guilelessness of a child! I dreamed of such innocence in a genius; you have marred that treasure. I forgive you; you live in Paris; and, as you say, a poet is a man.

"Will you, therefore, take me to be a silly school-girl, cherishing the enchanted garden of illusions? Nay, do not amuse

yourself with throwing stones at the broken windows of a long-ruined castle. You, a man of wit, how is it that you never guessed that Mademoiselle d'Este had already read herself the lecture contained in your first letter? No, my dear poet, my first note was a pebble flung by a boy loitering along the highway, who thinks it fun to startle a landowner reading his tax-paper under shelter of his fruit trees; or, rather, was the line carefully fixed by a fisherman from the top of a rock by the seashore, in hope of a miraculous draught.

"All you say so beautifully about family ties has my approbation. The man I shall love, and of whom I shall think myself worthy, shall have my heart and my life with my parents' consent. I would neither distress nor startle them; I am certain of overruling them, and they have no prejudices. Again, I am strong enough to defy the illusions of my fancy. I have built a stronghold with my own hands, and have allowed it to be fortified by the unbounded devotion of those who watch over me as a treasure—not that I am not strong enough to defend myself in open fight; for, I may tell you, fate has clothed me in well-tempered armor on which is stamped the word DISDAIN. I have the deepest horror of everything which suggests self-interest, of all that is not entirely noble, pure, and disinterested. Without being romantic, I worship the beautiful and the ideal; though I have been romantic, all to myself, in my dreams. And so I could recognize the truth—true even to platitude—of what you wrote me as to social life.

"For the present, we are only, and can only be, friends. Why seek a friend among the unknown? you will ask. Your person is unknown to me; but your mind and heart are known to me; I like them, and I am conscious of infinite feelings in my soul, which demand a man of genius as their only confidant. I do not want the poem of my heart to be wasted; it shall be as beautiful for you as it would have been for God alone. What a precious thing is a trusty comrade to whom

we may say what we will! Can you reject the unspoiled blossoms of a genuine girl? They will fly to you as gnats fly to the sunbeams. I am sure that your intellect has never before won you such a success—the confidences of a young girl. Listen to her prattle, accept the songs she has hitherto sung only for herself.

"By-and-by, if our souls are really akin, if on trial our characters agree, some day an old white-haired retainer will await you, standing by the roadside, and conduct you to a châlet, a villa, a castle, a palace—I do not yet know of what type that temple of Hymen may be—brown and gold, the colors of Austria, which marriage has made so powerful—nor whether such a conclusion may be possible; but confess that it is poetical, and that Mademoiselle d'Este has good ideas. Does she not leave you free? Does she come on jealous tiptoe to glance round Paris drawing-rooms? Does she lay on you the task of some high emprise, the chains which paladins of old voluntarily hung on their arm? What she asks of you is a really spiritual and mystical alliance.

"Come, come to my heart whenever you are unhappy, wounded, weary. Tell me everything, conceal nothing; I shall have balm for all your sorrows. I, my friend, am but twenty; but my mind is fifty, and I have unhappily known through another, my second self, the horrors and ecstasies of passion. I know all that the human heart can possibly contain of meanness and infamy, and yet I am the most honest girl living. No; I have no illusions left; but I have something better—faith and religion. There, I have played first in our game of confidences.

"Whoever my husband may be, if he is my own choice, he may sleep in peace; he might sail for the Indies, and on his return he would find me finishing the tapestry begun at his departure; no eyes would have looked into mine, no man's voice would have tainted the air in my ear; in every stitch he might find a line of the poem of which he was the

hero. Even if I should have been taken in by a fair and false exterior, that man would have every flower of my thought, every refinement of my tenderness, all the wordless sacrifices of proud and never suppliant resignation. Yes, I have vowed to myself never even to go out with my husband when he does not want me; I will be the divinity of his hearth. This is my human religion. But why should I not test and choose the man to whom I shall be what life is to the body? Does a man ever find life an inconvenience? What is a wife who annoys her husband? Not life, but a sickness. By life, I mean the perfect health which makes every hour an enjoyment.

"To return to your letter, which will always be dear to me. Yes, jesting apart, it really contains what I had hoped for—the expression of prosaic sentiments, which are as necessary to family life as air is to the lungs, and without which happiness is out of the question. What I hoped for in my friend was that he should act as an honest man, think as a poet, love as women love; and this is now, beyond a doubt, no longer a chimera.

"Farewell, my friend. At present I am poor. That is one of the reasons which makes me cling to my mask, my incognito, my impenetrable fortress.

"I read your last poem in the 'Revue,' and with what delight, after having mastered the austere and secret loftiness of your soul!

"Will it aggrieve you greatly to be told that a girl beseeches God fervently in your behalf, that she makes you her one thought, and that you have no rival in her heart but her father and mother? Can there be any reason why you should reject these pages that are full of you, that are written for you, that none but you will read? Repay me in kind. I am as yet so little a woman that your effusions, so long as they are genuine and full, will suffice for the happiness of your

"O. D'ESTE-M."

"Great heavens! am I in love with her already?" exclaimed the young referendary, when he discovered that he had been sitting for an hour with this letter in his hand, after having read it. "What must I do next? She believes she is writing to our great poet. Ought I to carry on the deception? Is she a woman of forty or a girl of twenty?"

Ernest was fascinated by the abyss of the unknown. The unknown is dark infinitude, and nothing is more enthralling. From that murky vastness flash fires which rend it from time to time, and light up visions like those of Martin. In a life as full as that of Canalis, an adventure of this kind is swept away like a cornflower among the boulders of a torrent; in that of a young referendary awaiting the reinstatement in power of the party of which his patron was the representative, and who, as a precaution, was dry-nursing Canalis for parliament, this pretty girl—his imagination persistently believed her to be the fair-haired damsel he had seen—was bound to find a place in his heart, and commit all the ravages caused by a romance when it breaks into a humdrum existence, like a wolf into a farmyard. So Ernest thought a great deal about his unknown correspondent, and he replied by the following letter—an elaborate and pretentious letter, but already betraying some passion by its tone of annoyance:

VIII.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"MADEMOISELLE:—Is it quite fair in you to come and establish yourself in a poor poet's heart with the admitted purpose of leaving him to his fate if he should not be to your mind, and bequeathing to him perennial regrets after showing him, for a few minutes, an image of perfection were it but assumed, or, at least, a first promise of happiness?

"I was wanting in foresight when I requested the letter in

which you have begun the display of your elegant assortment of ideas. A man may well fall in love with a stranger who can unite so much daring with so much originality, such fancy with such feeling. Who but would long to know you after reading these first confidences? It is only by a really great effort that I preserve my balance when I think of you, for in you are combined all things that can disturb a man's heart and brain. So I take advantage of the remains of coolness I am able to preserve to put the case humbly before you.

"Do you believe, mademoiselle, that letters which are more or less truthful in relation to life as it really is, and more or less insincere, since the letters we may write to each other must be the expression of the moment when we send them forth, and not the general outcome of our characters —do you believe, I ask, that, however fine they may be, these letters can ever take the place of the expression of ourselves we should give through the practical evidence of daily life? Each man is twofold. There is the invisible life of the spirit, which letters may satisfy, and the mechanical life, to which we attach, alas! more importance than you, at your age, can imagine. These two existences ought both to agree with the ideal you cherish, and this, it may be said, very rarely happens.

"The pure, spontaneous, disinterested homage of a solitary soul, at once well-informed and chaste, is one of those heavenly flowers whose color and fragrance are a consolation for every grief, every wound, every mortification entailed by a literary life in Paris; and I thank you with a fervor equal to your own; but after this poetical exchange of my woes in return for the pearls of your charity, what can you expect? I have neither the genius nor the splendid position of Lord Byron; above all, I have not the halo of his artificial damnation and his imaginary social grievances; but what would you have hoped for from him in similar circumstances? His friendship, no doubt. Well, he, who ought only to have

been proud, was eaten up by an offensive and sickly vanity which discouraged friendship. I, who am a thousand times less great than he—may not I, too, have such discords of nature as to make life unpleasing, and turn friendship into the most difficult burden? What will you get in return for your dreams? The vexations of a life which will not be wholly yours.

"The bargain is a mad one, for this reason: The poetry of your dreams is but a plagiarism. A young German girl, not half-German, like you, but wholly German, in the intoxication of her twenty years, adored Goethe; she made him her friend, her religion, her god, knowing that he was married. Frau Goethe, a good German soul, a poet's wife, lent herself to this worship with very shrewd complacency—which failed to cure Bettina! But what was the end? The ecstatic married some substantial worthy German. Between ourselves let us confess that a girl who should have made herself the handmaid of a genius, who should have raised herself to his level by understanding him, and have adored him piously till her death—as one of those divine figures might have done that painters have represented on the doors of their mystical shrines—and who, when Germany should lose Goethe, would have retired to some wilderness never more to see mankind—as Lord Bolingbroke's lady did—let us confess that this girl would have lived forever in the poet's glory as Mary Magdalen does in the blood-stained triumph of the Saviour.

"If this is sublime, what do you say to the converse of it?

"Being neither Lord Byron nor Goethe, but merely the writer of a few approved poems, I cannot claim the honors of worship. I have little in me of the martyr. I have a heart, but I am also ambitious, for I have to make my fortune, and I am yet young. See me as I am. The King's favor and the patronage of his ministers afford me a decent maintenance; I have all the habits of a very commonplace man. I go to evening parties exactly like the first fool you meet; but my carriage-wheels do not run, as the present times require,

on ground made solid under me by securities in the state funds.

"Though I am not rich, I have not, on the other hand, the distinction conferred by a garret, by neglected work, by glory in penury, on certain men of greater merit than mine; for instance, on d'Arthez.

"What prosaic fifth act will you not find for the enchanted fancy of your young enthusiasm? Let it rest here. If I have been so happy as to seem to you an earthly wonder, you will have been to me something radiant and supernal, like a star that blazes and vanishes. Let nothing tarnish this episode in our lives. By remaining as we are, I may love you, going through one of those mad passions which break down every obstacle and light fires in the heart, which are alarming by their violence out of all proportion to their duration; and, supposing that I should succeed in pleasing you, we must end in the vulgarest way—marriage, housekeeping, and children. Oh, Bélise and Henriette Chrysale in one, can that be? So, farewell."

IX.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"My Friend:—Your letter gave me as much pain as pleasure. Perhaps we may soon find it all pleasure to read each other's letters. Understand me. We speak to God; we ask of Him many things; He remains speechless. Now, I want to have from you the answers God never gives us. Cannot such a friendship as that of Mademoiselle de Gournay and Montaigne be repeated? Have you not known the household of Sismonde de Sismondi, at Geneva, the most touching home-life ever seen, and of which I have been told—something like that of the Marchese and Marchesa di Pescara, happy even in their old age? Good heavens! is it impossible that there

should be two harps, which, though at a distance, respond to each other as in a symphony, and vibrate so as to produce delicious harmony? Man alone, in all creation, is at once the harp, the musician, and the hearer.

"Do you see me fretting after the manner of ordinary women? Do I not know that you go into society and see the handsomest and cleverest women in Paris? Can I not imagine that one of those sirens might embrace you in her cold scales, and that it is she who has sent the answer that grieves me by its prosaic reflections? There is, my friend, something more beautiful than these flowers of Parisian blandishment; there is a flower that grows at the height of those Alpine peaks called men of genius; the pride of humanity, which they fructify by shedding on it the clouds they collect with their heads in the skies; that flower I intend to cultivate and to make it open, for its wild, sweet perfume will never fail us; it is perennial.

"Do me the honor to believe that in me there is nothing common. If I had been Bettina—for I know to whom you allude—I would never have been Frau von Arnim; and if I had been one of Lord Byron's loves, I should at this moment be in a convent. You have touched me in a sensitive spot.

"You do not know me; you will know me. I feel in myself a sublime something which may be spoken of without vanity. God has implanted in my soul the root of that hybrid plant I have mentioned as native to Alpine heights, and I will not stick it in a flower-pot at my window to see it perish. No, that gorgeous and unique blossom, full of intoxicating fragrance, shall not be dragged through the vulgarities of life; it is yours—yours without a glance having blighted it, yours for ever. Yes, dear one, yours are all my thoughts, even the most secret, the most mad; yours is the heart of a girl without reserve; yours an infinite affection. If I do not like you personally, I shall not marry.

"I can live the life of the heart, the life of your mind, of your feelings; they please me, and I shall always be, as I am now, your friend. There is beauty of nature in you, and that is enough for me. There lies my life. Do not disdain a pretty young handmaiden who, for her part, does not shrink from the idea of being some day the poet's old housekeeper, in some sort his housewife, in some sort his commonsense, in some sort his wealth. This devoted maid, so precious in your lives, is pure, disinterested Friendship, to whom everything is revealed; who listens sometimes with a shake of the head, and who sits late, spinning by the light of the lamp, to be at hand when the poet comes home, soaked by the rain or out of sorts. This is my destiny if I am never to be a happy and faithfully attached wife: I can smile on one as on the other.

"And do not suppose that France will be deeply aggrieved if Mademoiselle d'Este does not give her two or three children, or refuses even to be a Madame Vilquin, or the like. I, for my part, shall never be an old maid. I shall make myself a motherhood by beneficence, and by secretly sharing the existence of a great man, to whom I shall dedicate all my thoughts and all my earthly efforts. I have the utmost horror of the commonplace. If I should be free and rich—and I know I am young and handsome—I will never become the property of some simpleton under the excuse of his being the son of a peer of France; nor of some good-looking man, who would be the woman of the two; nor of any man who would make me blush twenty times a day at the thought that I was his. Be quite easy on that score.

"My father adores my wishes too much ever to contravene them. If my poet likes me, if I like him, the glorious palace of our love will be built so high that it will be absolutely inaccessible to misfortune. I am an eaglet; you will see it in my eye. I will not repeat what I have already told you, but I put it into fewer words when I assure you that I shall be of

all women the most glad to be as completely the captive of love, as I am at this moment of my father's will.

"Come, my friend, let us reduce to the truth of romance what has come upon us by my free-will.

"A girl of lively imagination shut up in a turret is dying to run about in a park which only her eyes can explore; she invents a way of opening her bars, she springs out of window, climbs the park wall, and goes off to sport at her neighbor's. It is the eternal comedy!—— Well, that girl is my soul, the neighboring park is your genius. Is it not most natural? Was a neighbor ever heard of who complained of his trellis being damaged by pretty feet?

"So much for the poet; but must the ultra-reasonable hero of Molière's comedies have reasons? Here are plenty. My dear Géronte, marriages are commonly made in direct opposition to commonsense. A family makes inquiries as to a young man. If this Léandre, provided by a friendly gossip, or picked up in a ball-room, has robbed no one, if he has no visible stain, if he has as much money as is expected, if he has come from college or has had a legal training, thus satisfying the usual ideas of education, he is allowed to call on a young lady, dressed to receive him from the moment when she gets up, instructed by her mother to be careful of what she says, and enjoined to keep anything of her soul or heart from being read in her countenance by assuming a set smile, like a dancer finishing a pirouette; she is armed with the most positive instructions as to the perils of showing her true character, and advised not to appear too distressingly knowing. The parents, when all the points of interest are satisfactorily settled between them, are simple-minded enough to recommend the young people to know all they can of each other during the few moments when they are alone, when they talk together, when they walk out—without any kind of freedom, for they know that they are tied already. Under such conditions a man dresses his mind as carefully as his

person, and the girl on her side does the same. This miserable farce, carried on with gifts of flowers and jewels and places at the play, is what is called courting a girl.

"This is what I rebel against, and I mean to make legal marriage the outcome of a long marriage of souls. In all a girl's life this is the only moment when she needs reflection, insight, and experience. Her liberty and happiness are at stake, and you place neither the dice nor the box in her hands; she bets on the game; she is but a looker-on. I have the right, the will, and the power to work out my own woe, and I will use them—as my mother did when, guided by instinct, she married the most generous, devoted, and loving of men, who bewitched her one evening by his beauty. I know you to be single, a poet, and handsome. You may be sure that I never should have chosen for my confidant one of your brethren in Apollo who was married. If my mother was attracted by a handsome face, which is perhaps the genius of form, why should not I be attracted by mind and form combined? Shall I know you better after studying you by correspondence than after beginning by the vulgar method of so many months of courting? 'That is the question,' saith Hamlet.

"My plan, my dear Chrysale, has at least the advantage of not compromising our persons. I know that love has its illusions, and every illusion has its morrow. Therein lies the reason why so many lovers part who believed themselves bound for life. The true test lies in suffering and in happiness. When, after standing this double test of life, two beings have shown all their faults and good qualities, and have learned each other's characters, they may go to the tomb hand in hand; but, my dear Argante, who tells you that our little drama has no future before it?—— And, at any rate, shall we not have had the pleasure of our correspondence?

"I await your commands, monseigneur, and remain, with all my heart, yours obediently, O. D'ESTE-M."

X.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"You are a demon! I love you. Is that what you want, extraordinary girl? Perhaps you only wish to divert your leisure in the country by looking on at the follies of which a poet is capable? That would be a very wicked thing. Your two letters betray just enough of mischief to suggest the doubt to a Parisian. But I am no longer master of myself; my life and future hang on the answer you may send me. Tell me whether the certain possession of an unbounded affection given to you, in defiance of social conventionalities, can touch you; if you will allow me to visit you? There will still be ample room for doubt and agony of mind in the question whether I shall personally be agreeable to you. If your answer is favorable, I alter my life, and bid adieu to many vexations which we are so foolish as to call happiness.

"Happiness, my dear, beautiful, unknown one, is what you have dreamed it; a perfect fusion of feelings, an absolute harmony of souls, a keen sense of ideal beauty—so far as God vouchsafes it to us here below—stamped on the common actions of a life whose round we are bound to follow; above all constancy of heart, far more precious than what we call fidelity. Can anything be called a sacrifice when the end is the supremest good, the dream of poets and of maidens, the poem to which on entering life—as soon as the spirit tries its wings—every lofty mind looks up with longing, brooding eyes, only to see it dashed to pieces against a stumbling-stone as hard as it is vulgar; for almost every man sees the foot of reality set down at once on that mysterious egg which hardly ever hatches out?

"I will not as yet tell you of myself, of my past, of my character, nor of an affection—almost motherly on one side,

and on mine almost filial—in which you have already wrought a change with results in my life that may explain the word sacrifice. You have made me forgetful, not to say ungrateful. Is that enough to satisfy you? Oh! speak! Say one word, and I shall love you till my eyes are closed in death, as Pescara loved his wife, as Romeo loved his Juliet, and as faithfully. Our life—mine, at any rate—will be that untroubled happiness of which Dante speaks as being the atmosphere of his 'Paradiso'—a poem infinitely superior to his 'Inferno.'

"Strange to say, it is not myself, but you, whom I doubt in the long meditations in which I have allowed myself—like you, perhaps—to follow the chimerical course of a dream-life. Yes, dear one, I feel in me the strength to love thus, to go on my way to the tomb gently, slowly, always smiling, arm in arm with the woman I love, without a cloud on the fair weather of my soul. Yes, I have courage enough to look forward to our old age together, to see us both with white hair, like the venerable historian of Italy, still inspired by the same affection, but changed by the spirit of each season.

"You see, I can no longer be no more than your friend. Though Chrysale, Oronte, and Argante, you say, have come to life again in me, I am not yet so senile as to drink of a cup held by the fair hands of a veiled woman without feeling a fierce desire to tear away the domino, the mask, and to see her face. Either write no more or give me hope. I must have a glimpse of you, or throw up the game. Must I say farewell? Will you allow me to sign myself,

"YOUR FRIEND?"

XI.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"What flattery! How quickly has grave Anselme turned into a dashing Léandre! To what am I to ascribe such a

change? Is it to the black I have scribbled on white, to the ideas which are to the flowers of my soul what a rose drawn in black-lead pencil is to the roses of the garden? Or to the remembrance of the girl you took for me, who is to my real self what a waiting-maid is to her mistress? Have we exchanged parts? Am I reason, and are you folly?

"A truce to this nonsense. Your letter made me acquainted with intoxicating joys of soul, the first I have not owed to family feelings. What, a poet has asked, are the ties of blood which weigh so heavily on ordinary souls in comparison with those which heaven forges for us of mysterious sympathies? Let me thank you—no, there are no thanks for such things. Blessings on you for the happiness you have given me; may you be happy with the gladness you poured into my soul.

"You have explained to me some apparent injustice in social life. There is something brilliant in glory, something masculine which becomes men alone, and God has prohibited women from wearing this halo while giving us love and tenderness with which to refresh the brows on which its awful light rests. I feel my mission, or, rather, you have confirmed me in it.

"Sometimes, my friend, I have risen in the morning in a frame of inconceivable sweetness. A sort of peace, tender and divine, gave me a sense as of heaven. My first thought was like a blessing. I used to call these mornings my German *levers*, to distinguish them from my southern sunsets, full of heroic deeds of battles, of Roman festivals, and of ardent verse. Well, after having read the letter into which you breathed a fever of impatience, I felt in my heart the lightness of one of those heavenly awakenings, when I loved air and nature, and felt myself destined to die for some one I loved. One of your poems, 'Le Chant d'une jeune fille,' describes these delicious hours when gladness is sweet, when prayer is a necessity, and it is my favorite piece. Shall I put all my flattery into one line: I think you worthy to be me!

"Your letter, though short, allowed me to read your heart. Yes, I could guess your tumultuous impulses, your excited curiosity, your plans, all the faggots carried (by whom) for the pyre of your heart. But I do not yet know enough of you to comply with your request. Understand, dear one, it is mystery which allows me the freedom that betrays the depths of my soul. When once we have met, farewell to our knowledge of each other.

"Shall we make a bargain? Was the first we made a bad one for you? You gained my esteem by it. And admiration supported by esteem is a great thing, my friend. First write me a sketch of your life in a few words; then tell me about your life in Paris, day by day, without any disguise, as if you were chatting to an old friend; well, then, after that I will carry our friendship a step further. I will see you, my friend, that I promise you; and it is a great deal.

"All this, dear, I warn you, is neither an intrigue nor an adventure; it cannot result in any kind of an 'affair' of gallantry, as you men say among yourselves. My life is involved in it, and, moreover—a thing which sometimes causes me terrible remorse as to the thoughts I send flying to you in flocks—not less involved is the life of a father and mother I adore, whom I must satisfy in my choice, and who in my friend must find a son.

"How far can you lordly souls, to whom God has given the wings of angels, but not always their perfections, yield to the family and its petty needs? A text I have pondered over already! Although before going forth to you I said in my heart, 'Be bold!' it has not quaked the less on the road, and I have never deceived myself either as to the roughness of the way or the difficulties of the mountain I had to climb. I have followed it all out in long meditations. Do I not know that men as eminent as you are have known the love they have inspired quite as well as that they have felt; that they have had more than one romance; and that you, above all, while

cherishing those thoroughbred chimeras which a woman will buy at any cost, have gone through more final than first chapters? And yet I could say to myself, 'Be bold!' because I have studied the geography of the high peaks of humanity that you accuse of coldness—studied them more than you think. Did you not say of Byron and Goethe that they were two colossal masses of egoism and poetry? Ah, my friend, you there fall into the error of superficial minds; but it was, perhaps, generosity on your part, false modesty, or the hope of evading me.

"The vulgar may be allowed, but you may not, to regard the results of hard work as a development of the individual. Neither Lord Byron, nor Goethe, nor Walter Scott, nor Cuvier, nor any inventor belongs to himself; they are all the slaves of an idea; and this mysterious power is more jealous than a woman, it absorbs them, it makes them or kills them for its own advantage. The visible outcome of this concealed life resembles egoism in its effects; but how dare we say that a man who has sold himself for the delight, the instruction, or the greatness of his age is an egoist? Is a mother accused of selfishness when she sacrifices everything for her child? Well, the detractors of genius do not discern its teeming maternity, that is all.

"The poet's life is so perpetual a sacrifice that he needs a gigantic organization to enable him to enjoy the pleasures of an ordinary life. Hence, if, like Molière, he insists on living the life of feelings while giving them expression in their most acute crises, what disasters come upon him! for to me the comic side of Molière, as overlaying his private life, is really horrible. The magnanimity of genius seems to me almost divine, and I have classed you with that noble family of egoists so called. Oh! if I had found shallowness, self-interest, and ambition where, as it is, I admire all the flowers of the soul that I love best, you cannot know what slow suffering would have consumed me. I found disappointment sitting at

the portal of my sixteenth year; what should I have done if at twenty I had found fame a liar, and the man who, in his writings, had expressed so many of the sentiments buried in my heart, incapable of understanding that heart when disclosed to him alone?

"Do you know, my friend, what would have become of me? I am going to admit you to the very depths of my soul. Well, I should have said to my father, 'Bring me any son-in-law to your mind; I give up all free-will; get me married to please yourself!'—and the man might have been a notary, a banker, avaricious, stupid, provincial, as tiresome as a rainy day, as vulgar as a parish voter; he might have been a manufacturer or some brave but brainless soldier—he would have found in me his most resigned and attentive slave. But then—dreadful suicide at every instant!—my soul would never have unfolded in the life-giving beams of the sun it worships. Not a murmur should ever have revealed to my father, my mother, or my children the suicide of the being who is at this moment shaking its prison-bars, flashing lightnings from its eyes, flying to you on outspread pinions, perching like a Polyhymnia in the corner of your study, breathing its atmosphere, and gazing at everything with a mildly inquisitive eye. Sometimes in the fields, where my husband might have taken me, I should have escaped a little way from my babes, and, seeing a lovely morning, would secretly have shed a few very bitter tears. Finally, in my heart, and in the corner of a drawer, I should have stored a little comfort for every girl betrayed by love, poor poetical souls dragged into torments by a smiling face!

"But I believe in you, my friend. This faith purifies the most fantastic notions of my secret ambition, and sometimes —see how frank I can be—I long to be in the middle of the story we have just begun, so assured am I of my feelings, such strength for love do I feel in my heart, such constancy founded on reason, such heroism to fulfill the duty I am creating for myself in case love should ever turn to duty.

"If it were given to you to follow me to the splendid seclusion where I picture our happiness, if you could know my schemes, you might utter some terrible sentence about madness, and I should perhaps be cruelly punished for sending so much poetry to a poet. Yes, I want to be a living spring, to be as inexhaustible as a beautiful country during the twenty years which nature allows us to shine in. I will keep satiety at a distance by refinements and variety. I will be brave for my love as other women are for the world. I will vary happiness, lend wit to tenderness, and piquancy to faithfulness. I am ambitious; I will kill my past rivals, dispel superficial troubles by the sweetness, the proud self-devotion of a wife, and, for a whole lifetime, give such care to the nest as a bird gives for only a few days. This immense dower ought, and could, only be offered to a great man before being dropped into the mire of vulgar conventionality.

"Now, do you still think my first letter a mistake? A gust of some mysterious will flung me toward you, as a tempest may carry a rose-bush to the heart of a stately willow. And in the letter I keep here—next my heart—you have exclaimed like your ancestor when he set out for the crusades, 'It is God's will!'

"You will be saying, 'How she chatters!' All those about me say, 'Mademoiselle is very silent!'

"O. D'ESTE-M."

These letters seemed very original to those persons to whose kindness the author of the "Comédie Humaine" is beholden for them; but their admiration for this duel between two minds crossing their pens, while their faces were hidden by the strictest incognito, may not be generally shared. Of a hundred spectators, eighty perhaps will be tired of this assault of arms. So the respect due to the majority—even to a possible majority—in every country enjoying a constitutional government, advises the suppression of eleven more letters

exchanged by Ernest and Modeste during the month of September; if a flattering majority should clamor for them, let us hope that it may one day afford me the means of restoring them here.

Tempted on by a wit as audacious as the heart beneath seemed to be adorable, the poor private secretary's really heroic feelings gave themselves the rein in those letters, which each reader's imagination may conceive of as finer than they really are, when picturing this harmony of two unfettered souls. Ernest, indeed, lived only on those dear scraps of paper, as a miser lives on those sent forth by the bank; while in Modeste a deep attachment had grown up in the place of the pleasure of bringing excitement into a life of celebrity, and being, in spite of distance, its chief element. Ernest's affection completed Canalis' glory. Alas! it often takes two men to make one perfect lover, just as in literature a type can only be produced by a compound of the peculiarities of several different characters. How often has a woman said in a drawing-room after some intimate talk: "That man would be my ideal as to his soul, but I feel that I love that other who is no more than a fancy of my senses!"

The last letter written by Modeste, which here follows, gives us a glimpse of the "Isle of Pheasants," whither the divagations of this correspondence was conducting our lovers:

XII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"Be at le Havre on Sunday; go into the church after the one o'clock service, walk round it two or three times, go out without speaking to any one, without asking anybody a question; wear a white rose in your button-hole. Then return to Paris, you will there find an answer. This answer will not be such as you expect, for, I must tell you, the future is not

yet in my hands. But should I not be really mad to say *yes* without having seen you? When I have seen you, I can say *no* without offense. I am sure to remain unrecognized."

This was the letter Modeste had sent off the very day before that on which the futile struggle between herself and Dumay had taken place. So she was happy in looking forward with yearning impatience to Sunday, when her eyes would prove her intuitions, her heart, to be right or wrong—one of the most solemn moments in a woman's life, made, too, as romantic as the most enthusiastic girl could desire by three months of communion soul to soul.

Everybody, excepting her mother, had taken this torpor of expectancy for the placidity of innocence. However stringent the laws of family life and religious bonds, there are still Julies d'Étanges and Clarissas—souls which, like a brimming cup, overflow under the divine touch. Was not Modeste splendid in the fierce energy she brought to bear on repressing her exuberant youth, and remaining concealed? Let us confess that the memory of her sister was more potent than any social limitations; she had sheathed her will in iron that she might not fail her father or her family. But what a turbulent upheaval! and how could a mother possibly fail to perceive it!

On the following day Modeste and Madame Dumay led Madame Mignon out into the noonday sun to her bench among the flowers. The blind woman turned her pale, withered face toward the ocean, inhaled the scent of the sea, and took Modeste's hand in her own, for the girl was sitting by her mother. Even as she was about to question her child, the mother hesitated between forgiveness and remonstrance, for she knew that this was love, and to her, as to the false Canalis, Modeste seemed exceptional.

"If only your father may be here in time! If he delays much longer, he will find you alone of those he loved!

Promise me once more, Modeste, never to leave him," she said, with motherly persuasiveness.

Modeste raised her mother's hands to her lips and kissed them softly, as she replied—

"Need I tell you so again?"

"Ah, my child, you see, I myself left my father to go to my husband! And my father was alone too; I was his only child—— Is that what God is punishing me for, I wonder? All I ask you is to marry in agreement with your father's choice, to keep a place for him in your heart, not to sacrifice him to your happiness; to keep him in the bosom of your family. Before I lost my sight I made a note of my wishes; he will carry them out; I have enjoined on him to keep the whole of his fortune, not that I have a thought of distrusting you, but can one ever be sure about a son-in-law? I, my child, was I prudent? A flash of an eye settled my whole life. Beauty, the most deceitful of shows, spoke the truth to me; but if it should ever be the same with you, poor child, swear to me that if appearances should carry you away, as they did your mother, you would leave it to your father to make inquiries as to the character, the heart, and the previous life of the man of your choice, if you make a choice."

"I will never marry without my father's consent," replied Modeste.

On hearing this answer, her mother sat in complete silence, and her half-dead countenance showed that she was pondering on it, as blind people ponder, meditating on her daughter's tone in speaking it.

"You see, my child," said Madame Mignon, after a long silence, "the thing is this: If Caroline's wrong-doing is killing me by inches, your father would never survive yours; I know him; he would blow his brains out; there would neither be life nor happiness on earth for him——"

Modeste walked away a few steps, and returned in a minute.

"Why did you leave me?" asked Madame Mignon.

"I WILL NEVER MARRY WITHOUT MY FATHER'S CONSENT."

"You made me cry, mamma," said Modeste.

"Well, my angel, kiss me then. You love no one here? You have no one paying attentions to you?"

"No, mamma," said the little Jesuit.

"Can you swear to that?"

"Really, truly!" cried Modeste.

Madame Mignon said no more; she still doubted.

"In short, if you should choose a husband, your father would know all about it?"

"I promised that to my sister and to you, mother. What sin do you suppose I could commit when every minute I read on my finger, 'Remember Bettina!' Poor little sister!"

At the moment when the words, "Poor little sister!" were followed by an interval of silence between Modeste and her mother, from whose darkened eyes fell tears which Modeste could not check even by falling at Madame Mignon's knees and crying, "Forgive me; forgive me, mamma!" at that very moment the worthy Dumay was mounting the hill of Ingouville at a rapid pace, an abnormal incident in the cashier's life.

Three letters had once brought them ruin; one had brought fortune back to them. That morning Dumay had received, by the hand of a captain just returned from the China seas, the first news he had had of his patron and only friend.

To Monsieur Dumay, formerly Cashier to the firm of Mignon.

"My dear Dumay:—Barring misadventure by sea, I shall follow closely on the vessel by which I am forwarding this letter; I would not leave the ship to which I am accustomed. I told you no news was to be good news; but the first words of this letter will rejoice you, for those words are, I have at least seven millions of francs! I am bringing a large part of it in indigo, a third in good bills on London and Paris, and

another third in bright gold. The money you sent me enabled me to make the sum I had determined on—two millions for each of the girls, and comfort for myself.

"I have been dealing wholesale in opium for the Canton houses, all ten times as rich as I am. You have no notion in Europe of what the rich China merchants are. I traveled from Asia Minor, where I could buy opium cheap, to Canton, where I sold it in bulk to the firms that deal in it.

"My last voyage was to the Malay archipelago, where I could buy indigo of the first quality with the proceeds of the opium trade. Perhaps I may find that I have five or six hundred thousand francs more, as I am valuing my indigo only at cost price.

"I have been quite well all the time; never an ailment. That is the reward of traveling for one's children! At the beginning of the second year I was able to purchase the 'Mignon,' a nice brig of seven hundred tons burthen, built of teak, and lined with the same, and copper-bottomed; fitted throughout to suit my convenience. This, too, is worth something. The seafaring life, the constant change needed in my trading, and hard work, as being in a way my own captain on the high seas, have all kept me in excellent health.

"To speak of all this is to speak of my two girls and my dear wife! I hope that on hearing of my ruin the wretch who robbed me of my Bettina may have deserted her, and the wandering lamb have returned to the cottage. She, no doubt, will need a larger dower.

"My three women and my good Dumay—you have all four been constantly in my thoughts during these three years. Dumay, you are a rich man. Your share, beside my own fortune, amounts to five hundred and sixty thousand francs, which I am forwarding to you by a draft, payable to yourself only, by the firm of Mongenod, who are advised from New York. A few months more and I shall see you all again—well, I hope.

"Now, my dear Dumay, I write to you only, because I wish you to keep the secret of my fortune, and I leave it to you to prepare my dear ones for the joy of my return. I have had enough of trade, and I mean to leave le Havre.

"The choice of my sons-in-law is a very serious matter. It is my intention to repurchase the estate and château of la Bastie, to endow it with an entailed settlement of a hundred thousand francs a year at least, and to petition the King to confer my name and titles on one of my sons-in-law. You, my dear Dumay, know the misfortune that befell us in consequence of the fatal splendor given by wealth. By that I wrecked the honor of one of my daughters. I carried back to Java the most wretched of fathers—an unhappy Dutch merchant, with nine millions of francs, whose two daughters had been both carried off by villains! We wept together like two children. So I will not have the amount of my fortune known.

"I shall not land at le Havre, but at Marseilles. My mate is a Provençal, an old retainer of my family, whom I have enabled to make a little fortune. Castagnould will have my instructions to repurchase la Bastie, and I shall dispose of my indigo through the firm of Mongenod. I shall place my money in the Bank of France, and come home to you, professing to have made no more than about a million of francs in merchandise. My daughters will be reputed to have two hundred thousand francs apiece. Then my great business will be to decide which of my sons-in-law may be worthy to succeed to my name, my arms, and my titles, and to live with us; but they must both be, as you and I are, absolutely steady, firm, loyal, and honest men.

"I have never doubted you, old boy, for a single instant. I have felt sure that my dear and admirable wife, with yours and yourself, will have drawn an impassable fence round my daughter, and that I may press a kiss full of hope on the pure brow of the angel that remains to me. Bettina Caroline, if

you have been able to screen her fault, will have a fortune. After trying war and trade, we will now go in for agriculture, and you must be our steward. Will that suit you?

"And so, old friend, you are master of your line of conduct to the family, to tell them, or to say nothing of my success. I trust to your judgment; you are to say just what you think right. In four years there may have been many changes of character. I make you the judge; I so greatly fear my wife's tender weakness with her daughters.

"Farewell, my dear old Dumay. Tell my wife and daughters that I have never failed to embrace them in my heart every day, morning and evening. The second draft, for forty thousand francs, payable, like the other, to you alone, is for my wife and daughters to go on with.

"Your master and friend,

"CHARLES MIGNON."

"Your father is coming home," said Madame Mignon to her daughter.

"What makes you think that, mamma?" asked Modeste.

"Nothing could make Dumay run but having that news to bring us."

Modeste, lost in her own thoughts, had not seen nor heard Dumay.

"Victory!" shouted the lieutenant from the gate. "Madame, the colonel has never been ill, and he is coming home—— He is coming on the 'Mignon,' a good ship of his own, which, with the cargo he describes to me, must be worth eight or nine hundred thousand francs. But he urgently begs you will say nothing about it; the disaster to our poor, lost child has eaten deeply into his heart."

"He has made room in it for a grave then," said Madame Mignon.

"And he ascribes this disaster—as seems to me most probable—to the greed which a large fortune excites in young

men. My poor colonel hopes to find the lost lamb among us here. Let us rejoice among ourselves, and say nothing to anybody, not even to Latournelle if possible. Mademoiselle," he added to Modeste apart, "write a letter to your father to tell him of the loss in the family and its terrible consequences, so as to prepare him for the dreadful sight that awaits him; I will undertake that he shall get the letter before arriving at le Havre, for he will be obliged to come through Paris; write fully, you have plenty of time; I will take the letter on Monday; on Monday, no doubt, I shall have to go to Paris——"

Modeste was now afraid lest Dumay and Canalis should meet; she was eager to go up to her room and write to put off the assignation.

"Tell me, mademoiselle," Dumay went on in the humblest tone, but standing in her path, "that your father will find his daughter without a feeling in her heart but that which was in it when he left—of love for her mother."

"I have sworn to my sister and my mother—I have sworn to myself to be my father's comfort, his joy, and his pride, and—I—will be," replied Modeste, with a haughty and scornful glance at Dumay. "Do not mar my joy at knowing that my father will soon be among us again by any offensive suspicions. A young girl's heart cannot be hindered from beating; you do not wish me to be a mummy? I belong to my family; but my heart is my own. If I love any one, my father and mother shall be told of it. Are you satisfied, monsieur?"

"Thank you, mademoiselle," replied Dumay. "You have restored me to life. But you might at least have called me Dumay, even when giving me a slap in the face!"

"Swear to me," said her mother earnestly and beseechingly, "that you have never exchanged a word or a glance with any young man."

"I can swear it," said Modeste, smiling, and looking at

Dumay, who was studying her with a mischievous smile like a girl's, when playing off some joke.

"Can she really be so false?" exclaimed Dumay, when Modeste had gone into the house.

"My daughter Modeste may have her faults," said the mother, "but she is incapable of a lie."

"Well, then, let us make ourselves easy," replied the lieutenant, "and be satisfied that misfortune has now closed its account with us."

"God grant it!" said Madame Mignon. "You will see him, Dumay; I can only hear him—— There is much sadness in my joy."

Modeste, meanwhile, though happy in the thought of her father's return, was, like Pierrette, distressed to see all her eggs broken. She had hoped for a larger fortune than Dumay had spoken of. She was ambitious for her poet, and wished for at least half of the six millions of which she had written in her second letter. Thus absorbed by her double happiness, and annoyed by the grievance of her comparative poverty, she sat down to her piano, the confidant of so many girls, who tell it their anger and their wishes, expressing them in their way of playing.

Dumay was talking to his wife, walking to and fro below her window, confiding to her the secret of their good fortune, and questioning her as to her hopes, wishes, and intentions. Madame Dumay, like her husband, had no family but the Mignon family. The husband and wife decided on living in Provence, if the Count should go to Provence, and to leave their money to any child of Modeste's that might need it.

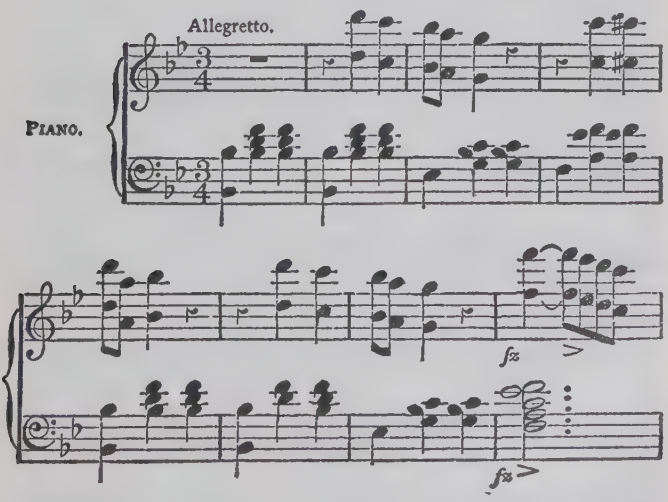
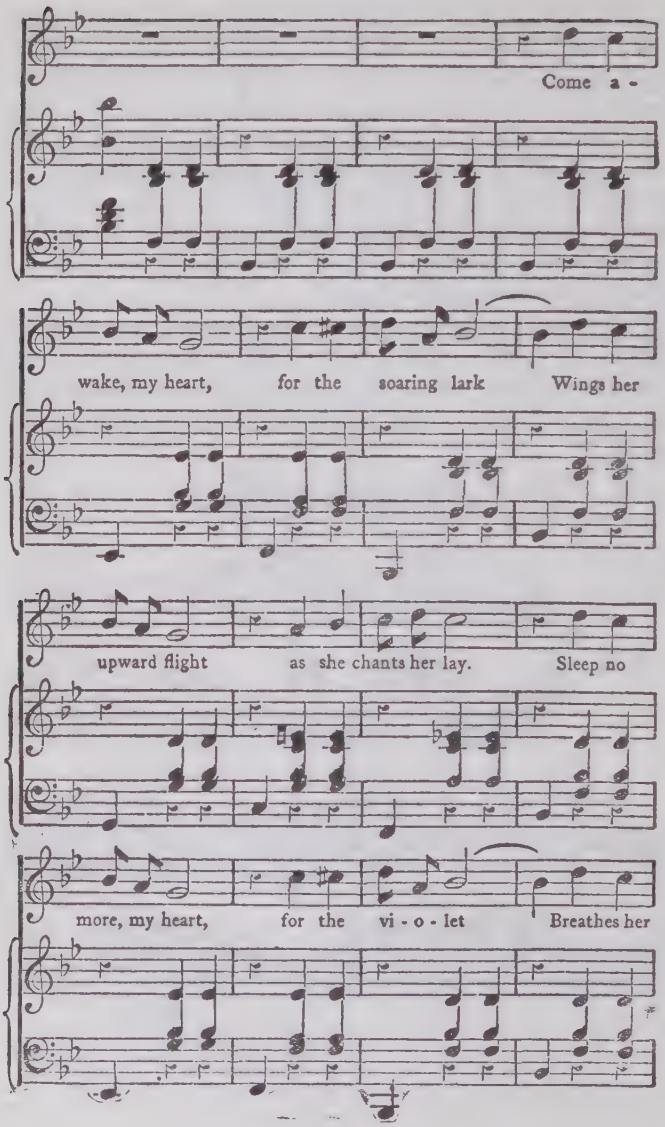
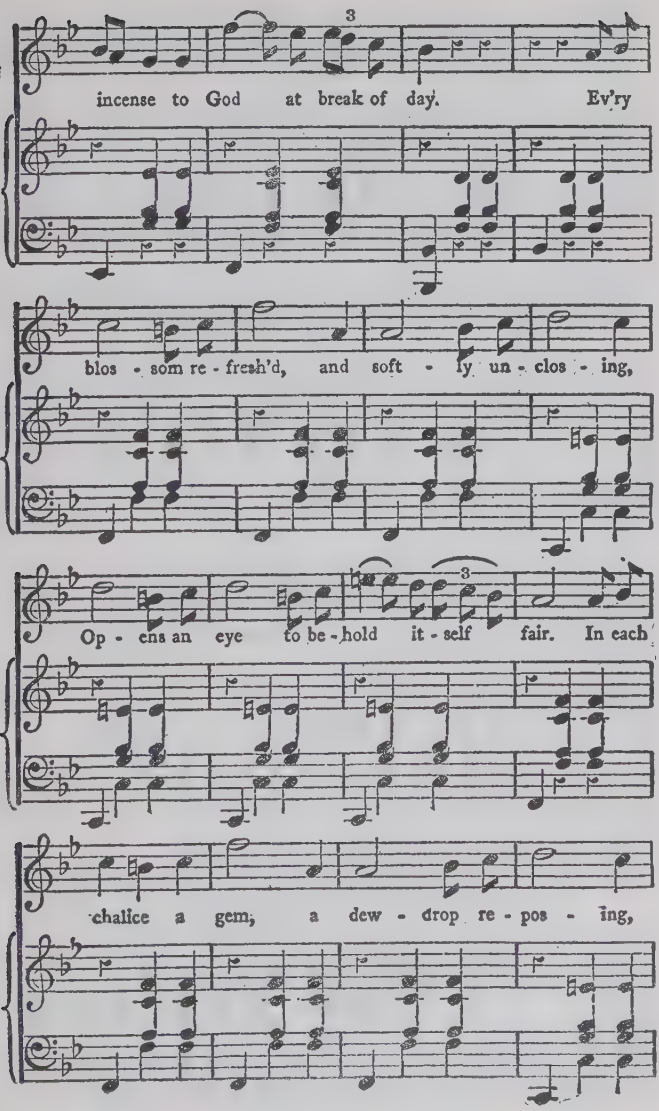
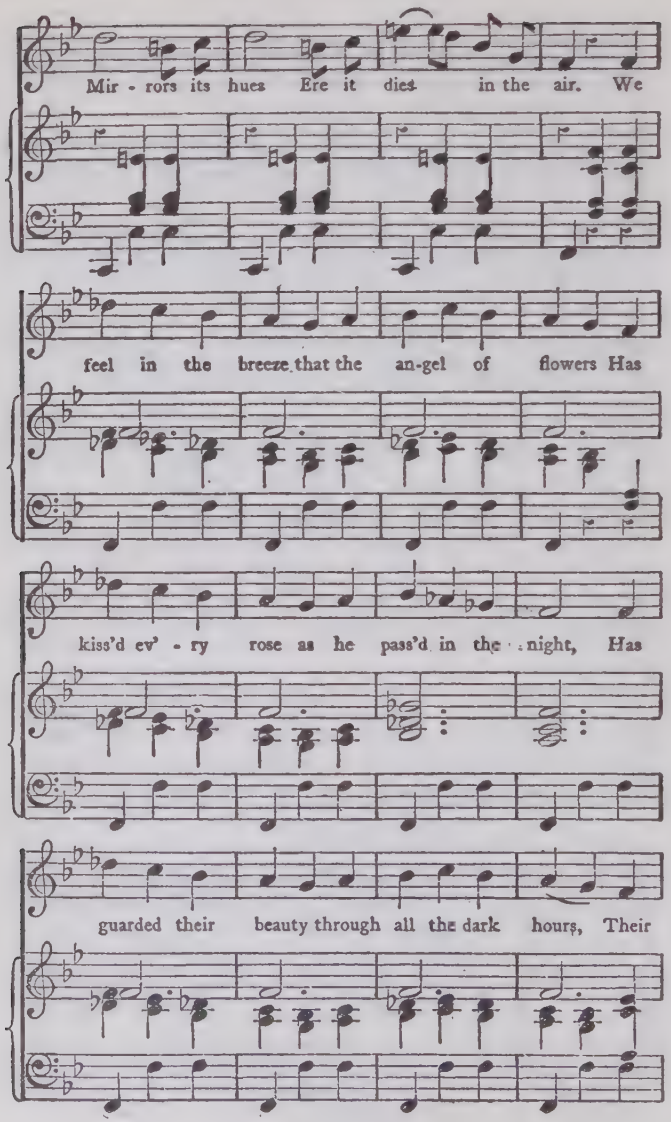
"Listen to Modeste," said Madame Mignon to them; "only a girl in love could compose such a melody without any knowledge of music."

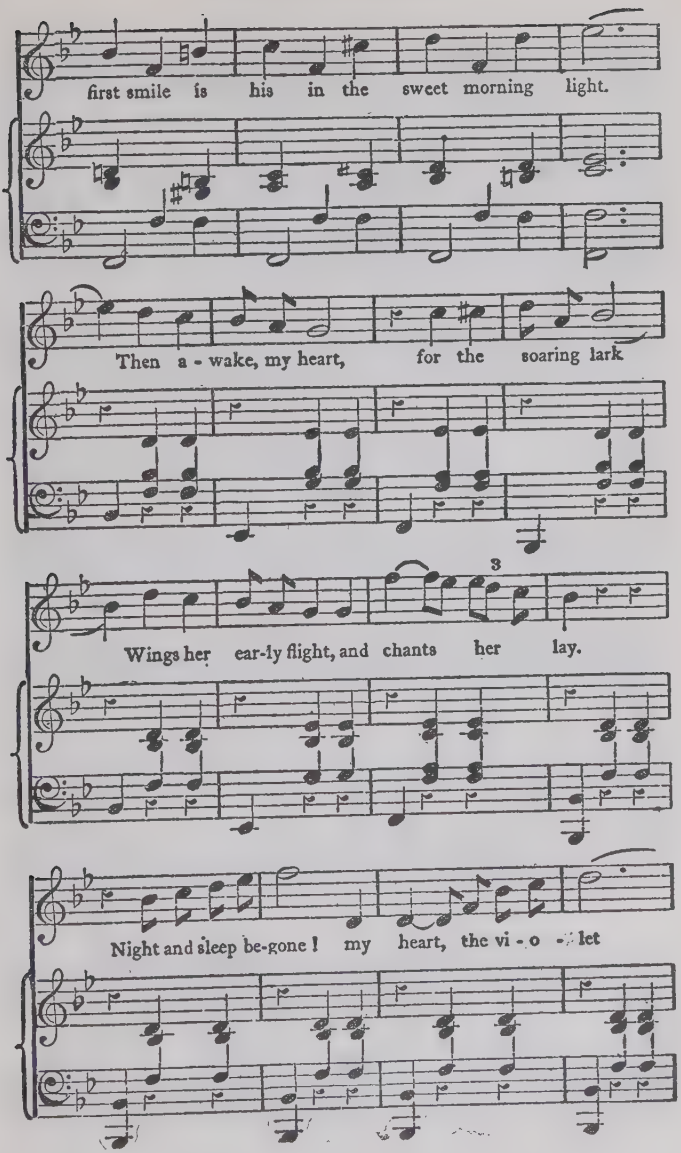
Homes may burn, fortunes may collapse, fathers may come back from their travels, empires may fall, cholera may ravage

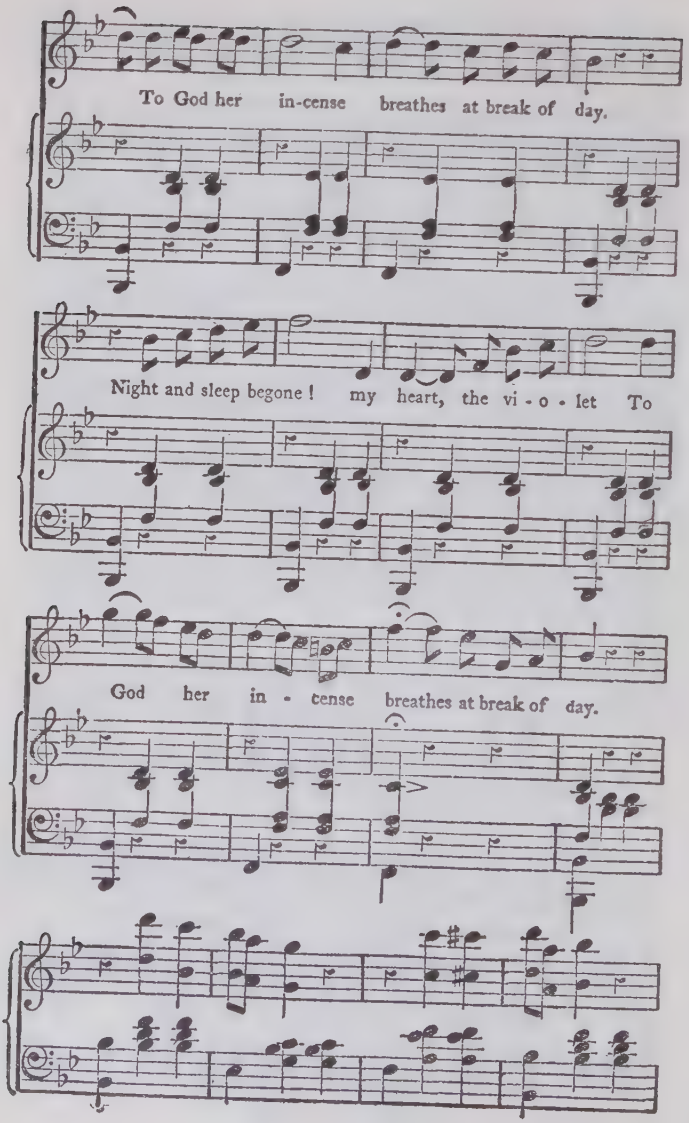
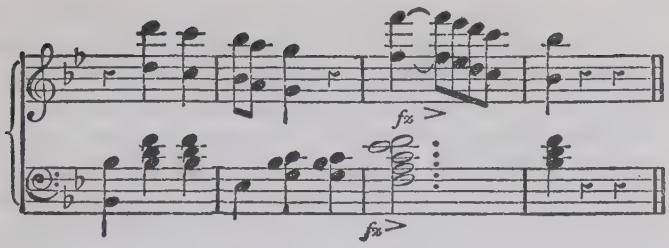
the town—a girl's love pursues its flight as nature keeps her course, or that horrible acid discovered by chemistry which might pierce through the earth if it were not absorbed in the centre.

This is the melody Modeste had improvised to some verses which must be quoted here, though they are to be found in the second volume of poems published by Dauriat; for, to adapt them to the air, the young composer had broken the rhythm by some changes which might puzzle the admirers of a poet who is sometimes too precise.

And here, too, since modern typography allows of it, is Modeste's music, to which her exquisite expression lent the charm we admire in the greatest singers—a charm that no printing, were it phonetic or hieroglyphic, could ever represent:

A MAIDEN'S SONG.


Come a -
wake, my heart, for the soaring lark Wings her
upward flight as she chants her lay. Sleep no
more, my heart, for the vi - o - let Breathes her

3
incense to God at break of day. Ev'ry
blos - som re - fresh'd, and soft - ly un - clos - ing,
3
Op - ens an eye to be - hold it - self fair. In each
chalice a gem, a dew - drop re - pos - ing,

Mir - rors its hues Ere it dies in the air. We
feel in the breeze that the an-gel of flowers Has
kiss'd ev' - ry rose as he pass'd in the night, Has
guarded their beauty through all the dark hours, Their


first smile is his in the sweet morning light.
Then a - wake, my heart, for the soaring lark
3
Wings her ear-ly flight, and chants her lay.
Night and sleep be-gone! my heart, the vi - o - let


To God her in-cense breathes at break of day.
Night and sleep begone! my heart, the vi - o - let To
God her in - cense breathes at break of day.

"It is pretty," said Madame Dumay. "Modeste is very musical; that is all."

"She has the very devil in her!" exclaimed the cashier, for the mother's dread had entered into his soul and made his blood run cold.

"She is in love," returned Madame Mignon.

By her success in communicating her conviction as to Modeste's secret passion on the irrefragable evidence of that melody, Madame Mignon chilled the cashier's joy over his patron's return and success. The worthy Breton went off to the town to do his day's business at Gobenheim's; then, before going home to dinner, he called on the Latournelles to mention his fears, and once more to request their help and coöperation.

"Yes, my good friend," said Dumay on the threshold, as he took leave of the notary, "I am of madame's opinion. She is in love, sure enough; beyond that the devil only knows!—— I am disgraced!"

"Do not worry yourself, Dumay," said the little notary. "We certainly, among us all, must be a match for that little lady. Sooner or later every girl who is in love does something rash which betrays her secret; we will talk it over this evening."

So all these persons, devoted to the Mignon family, were still a prey to the same anxiety as had tormented them before the experiment that the old soldier had expected to be deci-

sive. The futility of all these struggles so spurred Dumay's conscience that he would not go to Paris to fetch his fortune before he had discovered the clue to this enigma. All these hearts, caring far more for sentiment than for self-interest, understood that unless he found this daughter innocently pure, the colonel might die of grief on finding Bettina dead and his wife blind. The unhappy Dumay's despair made so deep an impression on the Latournelles that they forgot their loss of Exupère, whom they had sent off to Paris that morning. During the dinner hour, when the three were alone, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle and Butscha turned the matter over under every aspect and considered every conceivable hypothesis.

"If Modeste were in love with any one at le Havre, she would have quaked last night," said Madame Latournelle, "so her lover must be elsewhere."

"She swore this morning to her mother, in Dumay's presence, that she had not exchanged a glance or a word with a living soul," said the notary.

"Then she loves as I do!" said Butscha.

"And how do you love, my poor boy?" asked Madame Latournelle.

"Madame," replied the little hunchback, "I love all to myself, from afar, almost as far as from hence to the stars."

"And how do you get there, you great goose?" said Madame Latournelle, smiling at him.

"Ah, madame, what you take to be a hump is the sheath for my wings."

"Then this explains your seal!" laughingly exclaimed the lawyer.

The clerk's seal was a star; the motto, *Fulgens, sequar*—Shine, and I will follow you—the device of the house of Chastillonest.

"A beautiful creature may be as diffident as the most hideous," said Butscha, as if talking to himself. "Modeste is

quite clever enough to have feared lest she should be loved only for her beauty."

Hunchbacks are wonderful creatures, and due entirely to civilization; for, in the scheme of nature, weak or deformed beings ought to perish. A curvature or twist of the spinal column gives to these men, who seem to be nature's outcasts, a flashing look, in which is concentrated a greater quantity of nervous fluids than other men can command, in the very centre where they are elaborated and act, and whence they are sent forth like a light to vivify their inmost being. Certain forces are the result, detected occasionally by magnetism, but most frequently lost in the waste-places of the spiritual world. Try to find a hunchback who is not gifted in some remarkable way, either with a cheerful wit, superlative malignity, or sublime kindliness. These beings, privileged beings though they know it not, live within themselves as Butscha did, when they have not exhausted their splendidly concentrated powers in the battle they have fought to conquer obstacles and remain alive.

In this way we may explain the superstitious and popular traditions, which we owe to the belief in gnomes, in frightful dwarfs, in misshapen fairies—the whole race of *la bouteille*, as Rabelais has it, that contain rare balsams and elixirs.

Thus Butscha almost read Modeste; and with the eagerness of a hopeless lover, of a slave ever ready to die like the soldiers who, deserted and alone amid Russian snows, still shouted "*Vive l'Empereur!*" he dreamed of discovering her secret for himself alone.

As his chief and Madame Latournelle walked up to the chalet, he followed them with a very anxious mien, for it was imperative that he should conceal from every watchful eye, from every listening ear, the snare in which he meant to entrap the girl. There should be a flashing glance, a start detected, as when a surgeon lays his finger on a hidden injury.

That evening Gobenheim did not join them; Butscha was

Monsieur Dumay's partner against Monsieur and Madame Latournelle. At about nine o'clock, while Modeste was absent preparing her mother's room, Madame Mignon and her friends could talk openly ; but the poor clerk, stricken by the conviction which had come on him too, seemed as far away from the discussion as Gobenheim had been the night before.

"Why, Butscha, what ails you?" exclaimed Madame Latournelle, astonished at him. "One might think you had lost all your relations!"

A tear started to the poor fellow's eye—a foundling, deserted by a Swedish sailor, and his mother dead of grief in the workhouse!

"I have no one in the world but you," he replied in husky tones; "and your compassion is too pious ever to be withdrawn from me, for I will never cease to deserve your kindness."

The answer struck an equally sensitive chord in those present, that of delicacy.

"We all love you, Monsieur Butscha," said Madame Mignon with emotion.

"I have six hundred thousand francs of my own!" cried the worthy Dumay. "You shall be a notary at le Havre, and Latournelle's successor."

The American, for her part, had taken the poor hunchback's hand and pressed it.

"You have six hundred thousand francs!" cried Latournelle, pricking up his ears at this speech, "and you let these ladies stay here! And Modeste has no horse! And she no longer has lessons in music, in painting, in——"

"Oh, he has only had the money a few hours," exclaimed the American.

"Hush!" exclaimed Madame Mignon. While this was going on, the dignified Madame Latournelle had recovered herself. She turned to Butscha.

"My dear boy," said she, "you have so much affection around you that I never considered the particular bearing of a common phrase as applied to you; but you may thank me for my blunder, since it has shown you what friends you have earned by your beautiful nature."

"Then you have some news of Monsieur Mignon?" asked the notary.

"He is coming home," said Madame Mignon; "but we must keep it secret. When my husband hears how Butscha has clung to us, and that he has shown us the warmest and most disinterested friendship when the world turned its back on us, he will not leave you to provide for him entirely, Dumay. And so, my friend," she added, trying to turn towards Butscha, "you may proceed at once to deal with Latournelle——"

"He is of full age, five-and-twenty," said Latournelle. "And, on my part, it is paying off a debt, my dear fellow, if I give you the refusal of my practice."

Butscha kissed Madame Mignon's hand, wetting it with his tears, and showed a tearful face when Modeste opened the drawing-room door.

"Who has been distressing my mysterious dwarf?" she asked.

"Oh, mademoiselle, do we children nursed in sorrow ever shed tears of grief? I have just received such marks of attachment that I was moved with tenderness for all those in whom I liked to believe I had found relations. I am to be a notary; I may grow rich. Ah, ha! Poor Butscha may some day be rich Butscha. You do not know what audacity exists in this abortion!" he exclaimed.

The hunchback struck himself hard on his cavernous breast, and placed himself in front of the fireplace after giving Modeste a look that stole like a gleam from under his heavy, drooping eyelids; for in this unforeseen conjuncture he had found his chance of sounding his sovereign lady's heart.

For an instant Dumay fancied that the clerk had dared aspire to Modeste; he exchanged looks with his friends which were understood by all, and which made them gaze at the little hunchback with a sort of dread mingled with curiosity.

"I—I too—have my dreams," Butscha went on, not taking his eyes off Modeste.

The girl looked down instinctively, in a way which was a revelation to the clerk. "You love romances; allow me, in the midst of my joy, to confide my secret to you, and you will tell me if the end of the romance I have dreamed of for my life is possible—— If not, of what use is fortune. To me, more than to any one else, money is happiness, since to me happiness means the enriching of the one I love! You who know so many things, mademoiselle, tell me whether a man can be loved independently of his person—handsome or ugly, and for his soul alone?"

Modeste looked up at Butscha. It was a terrible, questioning look, for at this moment Modeste shared Dumay's suspicions. "When I am rich, I shall look out for some poor but beautiful girl, a foundling like myself, who has suffered much, and is very unhappy; I will write to her, comfort her, be her good genius; she shall read my heart, my soul; she shall have all my wealth, in both kinds—my gold, offered with great delicacy, and my mind, beautified by all the graces which the misfortune of birth has denied to my grotesque form! And I will remain hidden, like a cause which science seeks. God perhaps is not beautiful. The girl will naturally be curious and want to see me; but I shall tell her that I am a monster of ugliness, I will describe myself as hideous——"

At this, Modeste looked hard in his face. If she had said, "What do you know of my love affairs?" it could not have been more explicit.

"If I am so happy as to be loved for the poetry of my soul!—if, some day, I might seem to that woman to be only slightly deformed, confess that I shall be happier than the

handsomest of men, that even a man of genius beloved by such a heavenly creature as you are——"

The blush that mounted to Modeste's face betrayed almost the whole of the girl's secret to the hunchback.

"Well, now, if a man can enrich the girl he loves, and charm her heart irrespective of his person, is that the way to be loved? This has been the poor hunchback's dream—yesterday's dream; for to-day your adorable mother has given me the clue to my future treasure by promising to facilitate my acquiring an office and connection. Still, before becoming a Gobenheim, I must know whether such a horrible transformation will achieve its end. What do you think, mademoiselle, on your part?"

Modeste was so taken by surprise that she did not observe Butscha's appeal to her judgment. The lover's snare was better contrived than the soldier's; for the poor girl, quite bewildered, stood speechless.

"Poor Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle to her husbanand, "is he going mad?"

"You want to play the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast," said Modeste at last, "and you forget that the Beast is turned into Prince Charming."

"Do you think so?" said the dwarf. "Now I have always imagined that transformation to symbolize the phenomenon of the soul becoming visible and eclipsing the body by its radiant glory. If I should never be loved, I shall remain invisible, that is all! You and yours, madame," said he to his mistress, "instead of having a dwarf at your command, will have a life and fortune."

Butscha returned to his seat, and said to the three players, affecting perfect calmness—

"Who deals?"

But to himself he was saying with grief, "She wants to be loved for her own sake; she is corresponding with some sham great man, but how far has she gone?"

"My dear mamma, it has struck a quarter to ten," said Modeste to her mother.

Madame Mignon bid her friends good-night, and went to bed.

Those who insist on loving in secret may be watched over by Pyrenean dogs, mothers, Dumays, Latournelles—they are in no danger from these; but a lover! It is diamond cut diamond, fire against fire, wit against wit, a perfect equation, of which the terms are equal and interchangeable.

On Sunday morning Butscha was beforehand with Madame Latournelle, who always went to escort Modeste to mass, and stayed cruising about outside the chalet, waiting for the postman.

"Have you a letter for Mademoiselle Modeste this morning?" he asked of that humble functionary as he approached.

"No, monsieur, no——"

"We have been good customers of the government for some time past!" exclaimed the clerk.

"I believe you!" replied the postman.

Modeste from her room saw and heard this little interview; she posted herself at her window at this hour, behind the Venetian shutter, to watch for the postman.

She went down and out into the little garden, where, in a husky voice, she called out, "Monsieur Butscha!"

"Here am I, mademoiselle," said the hunchback, coming to the little gate, which Modeste herself opened.

"Will you tell me whether you include among your titles to the affection of a woman the disgraceful espionage you choose to exercise?" asked the girl, trying to overwhelm her slave by her gaze and queenly attitude.

"Yes, mademoiselle," he proudly replied. "I had never imagined," he added in a low voice, "that a worm could do good service to a star! But so it is. Would you rather have your heart read by your mother, Monsieur Dumay, and Madame Latournelle than by a poor creature, almost an outcast

from life, who is yours as much as one of the flowers you cut to gratify you for a moment? They all know that you love; I alone know how. Take me as you would take a watch-dog; I will obey you, I will protect you, I will never bark, and I will have no opinions about you. All I ask is that you will let me be of some use to you. Your father placed a Dumay in your menagerie; try a Butscha, and you will find it quite another story! A poor Butscha, who asks for nothing, not even for a bone."

"Well, I will take you on trial," said Modeste, who only wished to be rid of so sharp a guardian. "Go at once to all the hotels at Graville and le Havre, and ask if a M. Arthur has arrived from England——"

"Listen, mademoiselle," said Butscha respectfully, but interrupting Modeste, "I will just go for a walk on the beach, and that will be all that is necessary, for you do not wish me to go to church, that is all."

Modeste looked at the hunchback in blank astonishment.

"Yes, mademoiselle, though you have wrapped your face in wadding and a handkerchief, you have no cold; though you have a double veil to your hat, it is only to see without being seen."

"What endows you with so much penetration?" cried Modeste, reddening.

"Why, mademoiselle, you have no stays on! A cold would not require you to disguise your figure by putting on several petticoats, to hide your hands in old gloves, and your pretty feet in hideous boots, to dress yourself anyhow, to——"

"That will do," said she. "But, now, how am I sure that you will obey me?"

"My master wanted to go to Sainte-Adresse, and was rather put out; but as he is really very kind, he would not deprive me of my Sunday. Well, I will propose to him that we should go——"

"Go then, and I shall trust to you——"

"Are you sure you will not want me at le Havre?"

"Quite. Listen, mysterious dwarf, and look up," she said, pointing to a cloudless sky. "Can you see the track left by the bird that flew across just now? Well, my actions, as pure as that pure air, leave no more trace than that. Reassure Dumay and the Latournelles, reassure my mother; and be sure that this hand" (and she held out to him a slender little hand with upturned finger-tips, transparent to the light) "will never be given away, never even warmed by the kiss of what is called a lover, before my father's return."

"And why do you want me to keep away from church to-day?"

"Do you cross-question me, after all I have done you the honor to tell you and require of you?"

Butscha bowed without replying, and hastened home, enraptured at thus entering the service of his anonymous mistress.

An hour later Monsieur and Madame Latournelle came to fetch Modeste, who complained of a dreadful toothache.

"I really had not strength to dress," said she.

"Well, then, stay at home," said the notary's wife.

"No, no. I will go and pray for my father's safe return," replied Modeste; "and I thought that if I wrapped up well, it would do me more good than harm to go out."

So Mademoiselle Mignon set out alone with Latournelle. She would not take his arm for fear of being questioned as to the internal tremor that agitated her at the idea of so soon seeing her great poet. One look, the first, was about to decide her future existence.

Is there in the life of man a more exquisite moment than that of the first promised meeting? Can the feelings that lie buried in his heart, and that then burst into life, ever be known again? Can he ever again feel the pleasure that he finds, as did Ernest de la Brière, in choosing his best razors, his finest shirts, spotless collars, and impeccable clothes? We

deify everything that is associated with that supreme hour. We imagine poems in our hearts, secret poems as beautiful as the woman's, and on the day when each reads the other's soul all is over! Is it not the same with these things as with the blossom of those wild fruits, at once sharp and sweet, lost in forest depths, the delight of the sun, no doubt; or, as Canalis says in "The Maiden's Song," the gladness of the plant itself which the Angel of Flowers has allowed to see its own beauty.

This leads to the reflection that la Brière, a modest soul, like many another penurious being for whom life begins with toil and money difficulties, had never yet been loved. He had arrived at le Havre the night before, and had at once gone to bed like a coquette, to efface every trace of his journey; and he had now, after taking a bath, just completed a carefully advantageous toilet. This, perhaps, is the place for giving a full-length portrait of him, if only to justify the last letter Modeste was ever to write to him.

Born of a good family at Toulouse, distantly connected with that minister who took him under his patronage, Ernest has the well-bred air which comes of an education begun from the cradle; the habit of business has given it solidity without effort, for pedantry is the rock on which precocious gravity is commonly wrecked. Of medium height, his face is attractively refined and gentle; his complexion warm, though colorless, was at that time set off by a slender mustache and a small imperial, a *virgule à la Mazarin*. But for these manly witnesses, he would, perhaps, have looked too much like a girl dressed up, so delicate is the cut of his face and lips, so natural is it to attribute to a woman teeth of transparent enamel and almost artificial evenness. Add to these feminine characteristics a voice as sweet as his looks, as gentle as his turquoise-blue eyes, with Oriental lids, and you will perfectly understand how it was that the minister had nicknamed his young private secretary Mademoiselle de la Brière. His broad, smooth forehead, framed under thick black hair, has a dreamy look that does

not contradict the expression of his countenance, which is wholly melancholy. The prominence of the eyebrows, though delicately arched, overshadows the eyes, and adds to this look of melancholy by the sadness—a physical sadness, so to speak —that the eyelids give when they half-close the eyes. This secret bashfulness, to which we give the name of modesty, characterizes his features and person. The whole result will, perhaps, be better understood if we add that the theory of perfect drawing demands greater length in the shape of the head, more space between the chin, which ends abruptly, and the forehead, on which the hair grows too low. Thus the face looks flattened. Work had already graven a furrow between the eyebrows, which were thick, and too nearly met, like those of all jealous natures. Though la Brière was as yet slight, his figure was one of those which, developing late, are most unexpectedly stout at the age of thirty or thirty-five years.

The young man might very well have typified, to those who are familiar with French history, the royal and mysterious personality of Louis XIII., with his melancholy diffidence for no known reason, pallid under his crown, loving the fatigue of hunting, and hating work; so timid with his mistress as to respect her virtue, so indifferent to his friend as to leave him to be beheaded; explicable only by his remorse at having avenged his father on his mother—either a Catholic Hamlet or the victim of some incurable malady. But the canker-worm which paled the King's cheek and unnerved his strength was as yet, in Ernest, no more than simple distrust of himself, the shyness of a man to whom no woman had ever said, "How I love you!" and, above all, wasted self-sacrifice. After hearing the knell of a monarchy in the fall of a minister, the poor boy had found in Canalis a rock hidden under tempting mosses; he was seeking a despotism to worship; and this uneasiness, that of a dog in search of a master, gave him the expression of the King who found

his. These clouds and feelings, this "pale cast" over his whole person, made his face far more attractive than the young secretary himself imagined, annoyed as he was sometimes to find himself classed by women as a *beau ténébreux*—gloomily handsome; a style gone quite out of fashion at a time when every man would gladly keep the clarions of advertisement for his own exclusive use.

So Ernest the diffident had sought the adornment of the most fashionable clothes. For this interview, when everything would depend on first sight, he donned black trousers and carefully polished shoes, a sulphur-colored waistcoat, revealing an excessively fine shirt fastened with opal studs, a black necktie, and a short blue coat, which looked as if it had been glued to his back and waist by some new process; his rosette graced the button-hole. He wore smart kid gloves of the color of Florentine bronze, and held in his left hand a light cane and his hat, with a certain Louis-quatorze air; thus showing, as the sacred place demanded, his carefully combed hair, on which the light shed satin-like reflections. Standing sentry under the porch from the very beginning of the service, he studied the church while watching all the Christians, more especially those in petticoats, who came to dip their fingers in the holy water.

As Modeste came in, an inner voice cried out, "'Tis he!" That coat and figure, so essentially Parisian, the rosette, the gloves, the walking-cane, the scented hair—none of these things were native to le Havre. And when la Brière turned to look at the notary's tall and showy wife, the little notary himself and the bundle—a word dedicated to this sense by women—under which Modeste had concealed herself, though she was fully prepared, the poor child was stricken to the heart by the aspect of this romantic countenance, in the bright daylight from the open door. She could not be mistaken; a small white rose almost hid the rosette. Would Ernest recognize his unknown fair hidden under an old hat

and a double veil? Modeste was so fearful of the clairvoyance of love that she walked with an elderly shuffle.

"Wife," said Latournelle, as he went to his place, "that man does not belong to le Havre."

"So many strangers come through," replied that lady to her husband.

"But do strangers ever think of coming to see our church, which is not more than two centuries old?"

Ernest remained in the porch all through the service without seeing any woman who realized his hopes. Modeste, on her part, could not control her trembling till near the end. She was agitated by joys which she alone could have described. At last she heard on the pavement the step of a gentleman, for, mass being over, Ernest was walking round the church, where no one remained but the *dilettanti* of prayer, who became to him the object of anxious and piercing scrutiny. He remarked the excessive trembling of the prayer-book held by the veiled lady as he passed her; and as she was the only one who hid her face, he conceived some suspicions, confirmed by Modeste's dress, which he studied with the care of an inquisitive lover.

When Madame Latournelle left the church, he followed her at a decent distance, and saw her, with Modeste, go into the house in the Rue Royale, where Mademoiselle Mignon usually waited till the hour of vespers. Ernest studied the house, decorated with escutcheons, and asked of a passer-by the name of the owner, who was mentioned almost with pride as Monsieur Latournelle, the first notary of le Havre.

As he lounged down the Rue Royale, trying to catch a glimpse of the interior of the house, Modeste could see her lover; she then declared herself to be too ill to attend vespers, and Madame Latournelle kept her company. So poor Ernest had his cruise for his pains. He dared not go to loiter about Ingouville; he made it a point of honor to obey, and returned to Paris after writing a letter while waiting for the coach, and

posting it for Françoise Cochet to receive next morning with the postmark of le Havre.

Monsieur and Madame Latournelle dined at the chalet every Sunday, taking Modeste home after vespers. As soon as the young lady felt better, they all went up to Ingouville, followed by Butscha. Modeste, quite happy, now dressed herself beautifully. As she went down to dinner she forget all about her disguise of the morning, and her cold, and sang—

> "Night and sleep begone! My heart, the violet
> To God her incense breathes at break of day!"

Butscha felt a thrill as he beheld Modeste, she seemed to him so completely changed; for the wings of love fluttered, as it were, on her shoulders; she looked like a sylph, and her cheeks glowed with the divine hue of happiness.

"Whose words are those which you have set to such a pretty air?" Madame Mignon asked her daughter.

"They are by Canalis, mamma," she replied, turning in an instant to the finest crimson, from her neck to the roots of her hair.

"Canalis!" exclaimed the dwarf, who learned from Modeste's tone and blush all of her secret that he as yet knew not. "He, the great poet, does he write ballads?"

"They are some simple lines," replied she, "to which I have ventured to adapt some reminiscences of German airs."

"No, no, my child," said Madame Mignon; "that music is your own, my dear."

Modeste, feeling herself grow hotter and hotter, went out into the garden, taking Butscha with her.

"You can do me a great service," said she, in an undertone. "Dumay is affecting discretion to my mother and me as to the amount of the fortune my father is bringing home, and I want to know the truth. Has not Dumay, at different times, sent papa five hundred and something thousand francs?

My father is not the man to stay abroad four years simply to double his capital. Now a ship is coming in that is [illegible] own, and the share he offers Dumay amounts to nearly six hundred thousand francs."

"We need not question Dumay," said Butscha. "Your father had lost, as you know, four millions of francs before his departure, these he has no doubt recovered; he would certainly have given Dumay ten per cent. of his profits; so, from the fortune the worthy Breton confesses to, my chief and I calculate that the colonel's must amount to six or seven millions——"

"Oh, father!" cried Modeste, crossing her arms and raising her eyes to heaven, "you have given me a second life!"

"Oh, mademoiselle, you love a poet! A man of that stamp is more or less of a Narcissus. Will he love you as he ought? A craftsman in words, always absorbed in fitting sentences together, is very fatiguing. A poet, mademoiselle, is not poetry—any more than the seed is the flower."

"Butscha, I never saw such a handsome man!"

"Beauty, mademoiselle, is a veil which often serves to hide many imperfections."

"He has the most angelic heart that heaven——"

"God grant you may be right," said the dwarf, clasping his hands. "May you be happy! That man, like yourself, will have a slave in Jean Butscha. I shall then no longer be a notary; I shall give myself up to study—to science——"

"And why?"

"Well, mademoiselle, to bring up your children, if you will condescend to allow me to be their tutor—— Oh! if you would accept a piece of advice! Look here, let me go to work my own way. I could ferret out this man's life and habits, could discover if he is kind, if he is violent or gentle, if he will show you the respect you deserve, if he is capable of loving you perfectly, preferring you to all else, even to his own talent——"

"What can it matter if I love him?" said she simply.

"To be sure, that is true," cried the hunchback.

At this moment Madame Mignon was saying to her friends:

"My daughter has this day seen the man she loves."

"Can it be that sulphur-colored waistcoat that puzzled you so much, Latournelle?" at once ejaculated the notary's wife. "That young man had a pretty white rosebud in his button-hole and——"

"Ah!" said the mother, "a token to be known by!"

"He wore the rosette of the Legion of Honor," Madame Latournelle went on. "He is a charming youth! But we are all wrong; Modeste never raised her veil, she was huddled up like a pauper, and——"

"And she said she was ill," added the notary. "But she has thrown off her mufflers, and is perfectly well now!"

"It is incomprehensible!" said Dumay.

"Alas! it is as clear as day," said the notary.

"My child," said Madame Mignon to Modeste, who came in, followed by Butscha, "did you happen to see in church this morning a well-dressed little man with a white rose in his buttonhole, and the rosette——"

"I saw him," Butscha hastily put in, seeing by the attention of the whole party what a trap Modeste might fall into. "It was Grindot, the famous architect, with whom the town is treating for the restoration of the church. He came from Paris, and I found him this morning examining the outside as I set out for Sainte-Adresse."

"Oh! he is an architect! He puzzled me greatly," said Modeste, to whom Butscha had secured time to recover herself.

Dumay looked askance at Butscha. Modeste, put on her guard, assumed an impenetrable demeanor. Dumay's suspicions were excited to the highest pitch, and he resolved to go next day to the mayor and ascertain whether the expected architect had in fact been at le Havre. Butscha, on his part,

very uneasy as to Modeste's ultimate fate, decided on starting for Paris to set a watch over Canalis.

Gobenheim arrived in time to play a rubber, and his presence repressed the ferment of feeling. Modeste awaited her mother's bedtime almost with impatience; she wanted to write, and this is the letter her love dictated to her when she thought that every one was asleep:

XIII.

To Monseiur de Canalis.

"Oh, my best-beloved friend, what vile libels are your portraits displayed in the print-sellers' windows! And I who was happy with that detestable lithograph! I am quite shy of loving such a handsome man. No, I cannot conceive that Paris women can be so stupid as not to see, one and all, that you are the fulfillment of their dreams. You neglected! You loveless! I do not believe a word you have said about your obscure and laborious life, your devotion to an idol till now vainly sought for. You have been too well loved, monsieur; your brow, as pale and smooth as a magnolia petal, plainly shows it, and I shall be wretched.

"What am I now? Ah! why have you called me forth to life? In one instant I felt that I had shed my ponderous chrysalis! My soul burst the crystal which held it captive; it rushed through my veins. In short, the cold silence of things suddenly ceased to me; everything in nature spoke to me. The old church to me was luminous; its vault, glittering with gold and azure, like that of an Italian church, sparkled above my head. The melodious strains, sung by angels to martyrs to make them forget their anguish, sounded through the organ! The hideous pavement of le Havre seemed like a flowery path. I recognized the sea

as an old friend, whose language, full of sympathy, I had never known well enough. I saw how the roses in my garden and greenhouse had long worshiped me, and whispered to me to love! They all smiled on me on my return from church; and, to crown all, I heard your name of Melchior murmured by the flower-bells; I saw it written on the clouds! Yes, I am, indeed, alive, thanks to you—poet more beautiful than that cold and prim Lord Byron, whose face is as dull as the English climate. Wedded to you by one only of your Oriental glances which pierced my black veil, you transfused your blood into my veins, and it fired me from head to foot. Ah, we do not feel life like that when our mothers bring us into the world! A blow dealt to you would fall on me at the same instant, and my existence henceforth can only be accounted for by your mind. I know now the purpose of the divine harmony of music; it was invented by the angels to express love.

"To be a genius and handsome, too, my Melchior, is too much. A man should have a choice at his birth. But when I think of the treasures of tenderness and affection you have lavished on me, especially during this last month, I wonder whether I am dreaming! Nay, you must be hiding some mystery. What woman could give you up without dying of it? Yes, jealousy has entered my heart with such love as I could not believe in! Could I imagine such a conflagration?

"A new and inconceivable vagary! I now wish you were ugly! What follies I committed when I got home! Every yellow dahlia reminded me of your pretty waistcoat, every white rose was a friend, and I greeted them with a look which was yours, as I am wholly! The color of the gentleman's well-fitting gloves—everything, to the sound of his step on the flagstones—everything is so exactly represented by my memory that, sixty years hence, I shall still see the smallest details of this high day, the particular hue of the atmosphere,

and the gleam of the sunbeam reflected from a pillar; I shall hear the prayer which your advent broke into; I shall breathe the incense from the altar; and I shall fancy that I feel above our heads the hands of the priest who was giving us the final benediction just as you went past. That good Abbé Marcellin has married us already. The superhuman joy of experiencing this world of new and unexpected emotions can only be equaled by the joy I feel in telling you of them, in rendering up all my happiness to him who pours it into my soul with the unstinting bounty of the sun. So no more veils, my beloved! Come, oh, come back soon! I will unmask with joy.

"You have, no doubt, heard of the firm of Mignon of le Havre? Well, in consequence of an irreparable loss, I am the sole heiress of the family. Do not scorn us, you who are descended from one of the heroes of Auvergne. The arms of Mignon de la Bastie will not dishonor those of Canalis. They are *gules, a bend sable charged with three besants, in each quarter a patriarchal cross or*, surmonted by a cardinal's hat, and the cord and tassels as mantling. My dear, I will be faithful to our motto, *Una fides, unus Dominus!* One faith and one Lord.

"Perhaps, my friend, you will think there is some irony in my name after all I have here confessed. It is Modeste. Thus, I did not altogether cheat you in signing 'O. d'Este-M.' Nor did I deceive you in speaking of my fortune; it will, I believe, amount to the sum which has made you so virtuous. And I know so surely that to you money is so unimportant a consideration, that I can write of it unaffectedly. At the same time, you must let me tell you how glad I am to be able to endow our happiness with the freedom of action and movement that wealth gives, the power of saying, 'Let us go——' when the fancy takes us to see a foreign land, of flying off in a comfortable carriage, seated side by side, without a care about money; and happy, too, to give you the right of saying

to the King, 'I have such a fortune as you require in your peers!'

"In this, Modeste Mignon can be of some service to you, and her money will find noble uses. As to your humble servant, you have seen her once, at her window in a wrapper. Yes, the fair-haired daughter of Eve was your unknown correspondent; but how little does the Modeste of to-day resemble her whom you then saw! She was wrapped in a shroud, and this other—have I not told you so?—has derived from you the life of life. Pure and permitted love, a love that my father, now at last returning from his travels and with riches, will sanction, has uplifted me with its childlike but powerful hand from the depths of the tomb where I was sleeping. You awoke me as the sun awakes the flowers. The glance of her you love is not now that of the bold-faced little Modeste! Oh, no; it is bashful, it has glimpses of happiness, and veils itself under chaste eyelids. My fear now is that I cannot deserve my lot. The King has appeared in his glory; my liege has now a mere vassal, who implores his forgiveness for taking such liberties, as the thimble-rigger with loaded dice did after cheating the Chevalier de Grammont.

"Yes, beloved poet, I will be your 'Mignon,' but a happier Mignon than Goethe's, for you will leave me to dwell in my native land, won't you?—in your heart.

"As I write this bridal wish, a nightingale in the Vilquins' park has just answered for you. Oh! let me quickly hear that the nightingale, with his long-drawn note, so pure, so clear, so full, inundating my heart with love and gladness, like an annunciation, has not lied.

"My father will pass through Paris on his way from Marseilles. The house of Mongenod, his correspondents, will know his address; go and see him, my dearest Melchior, tell him that you love me, and do not try to tell him how much I love you; let that be a secret always between us and God! I, dear adored one, will tell my mother everything. She, a

daughter of Wallenrod Tustall-Bartenstild, will justify me by her caresses; she will be made happy by our secret and romantic poem, at once human and divine! You have the daughter's pledge; now obtain the consent of the Comte de la Bastie, the father of your own

"MODESTE.

"*P. S.*—Above all, do not come to le Havre without having obtained my father's permission; and, if you love me, you will be able to discover him on his way through Paris."

"What are you doing at this time of night, Mademoiselle Modeste?" asked Dumay.

"I am writing to my father," she replied to the old soldier. "Did you not tell me that you were starting to-morrow?"

Dumay had no answer to this and went to bed, while Modeste wrote a long letter to her father.

Next day Françoise Cochet, alarmed at seeing the Havre postmark, came up to the chalet to deliver to her young mistress the following letter, and carry away that which Modeste had written:

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"My heart warns me that you were the woman, so carefully veiled and disguised, placed between Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, who have but one child, a son. Ah, dearly loved one! if you are of humble rank, devoid of position, distinction, or even fortune, you cannot imagine what my joy would be. You must know me by this time: why not tell me the whole truth? I am no poet excepting through love, in my heart, and for you. Oh, what immense affection I must have to stay here, in this Hôtel de Normandie, and not walk up to Ingouville, that I can see from my windows!

Will you love me as I love you? To have to leave le Havre for Paris in such uncertainty! Is not that being punished for loving as if I had committed a crime? I have obeyed you blindly.

"Ah! let me soon have a letter; for, if you are mysterious, I have returned mystery for mystery, and I must at last throw off the mask of my incognito, and tell you how little I am a poet, abdicating the glory you have lent me."

This letter greatly disturbed Modeste; she could not withdraw her own, which Françoise had already posted by the time she read the last lines once more, puzzled as to their meaning; but she went up to her room, and wrote an answer, asking for explanations.

During these little incidents, others, equally small, were happening in the town, and were destined to make Modeste forget her uneasiness. Dumay, having gone early to le Havre, at once knew that no architect had arrived there the night before last. Furious at the lie told him by Butscha, which revealed a complicity which he was determined he would know the meaning of, he hurried from the mayor to the Latournelles.

"Where is your Master Butscha?" asked he of his friend the notary, on not finding the clerk in the office.

"Butscha, my dear fellow? He is on the road to Paris, whisked away by the steamboat. Early this morning, on the quay, he met a sailor, who told him that his father, the Swedish sailor, has come into some money. Butscha's father went to India, it would seem, and served some prince, a Mahratta, and he is now in Paris——"

"A pack of lies! Shameful! Monstrous! Oh, I will find that damned hunchback; I am going to Paris, and on purpose for that!" cried Dumay. "Butscha is deceiving us! He knows something about Modeste, and has never told us. If he dares meddle in the matter—— He shall

never be a notary; I will cast him back on his mother, in the mire, in the——"

"Come, my friend, never hang a man without trying him," replied Latournelle, quite terrified at Dumay's exasperation.

After explaining on what his suspicions were founded, Dumay begged Madame Latournelle to stay at the chalet with Modeste during his absence.

"You will find the colonel in Paris," said the notary. "In the shipping news this morning, in the 'Commerce' newspaper, under the heading of Marseilles. Here, look!" he said, handing him the sheet. "The 'Bettina Mignon,' Captain Mignon, arrived October 16th, and to-day is the 17th. At this moment all le Havre knows of the master's return."

Dumay requested Gobenheim to dispense henceforth with his services; he then returned at once to the chalet, going in at the moment when Modeste had just closed her letters to her father and to Canalis. The two letters were exactly alike in shape and thickness, differing only in the address. Modeste thought she had laid that to her father over that to her Melchior, and had done just the reverse. This mistake, so common in the trifles of life, led to the discovery of her secret by her mother and Dumay.

The lieutenant was talking eagerly to Madame Mignon in the drawing-room, confiding to her the fresh fears to which Modeste's duplicity and Butscha's connivance had given rise.

"I tell you, madame," he exclaimed, "he is a viper we have warmed on our hearth; there is not room for a soul in these fag-ends of humanity."

Modeste had slipped the letter to her father into her pocket, fancying that it was the letter to her lover, and went down with that addressed to Canalis in her hand, hearing Dumay speak of starting immediately for Paris.

"What is wrong with my poor mysterious dwarf, and why

are you talking so loud?" said she at the door of the drawing-room.

"Butscha, mademoiselle, set out for Paris this morning, and you, no doubt, can say why! It must be to carry on some intrigue with the so-called little architect in a sulphur-colored waistcoat, who, unluckily for the hunchback's falsehood, has not yet been to le Havre."

Modeste was startled; she guessed that the dwarf had gone off to make his own inquiries as to the poet's manners and customs; she turned pale, and sat down.

"I will be after him; I will find him!" said Dumay. "That, no doubt, is the letter for your father?" he added, holding out his hand. "I will send it to Mongenod's—if only my colonel and I do not cross on the way."

Modeste gave him the lettter. Little Dumay, who could read without spectacles, mechanically read off the following address—

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29!" he exclaimed. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Ah! my child, then he is the man you love!" cried Madame Mignon. "The verses that you set to music are by him——"

"And it is his portrait that you have upstairs in a frame!" added Dumay.

"Give me back that letter, Monsieur Dumay," said Modeste, drawing herself up, like a lioness defending her cubs.

"Here it is, mademoiselle," he replied. Modeste slipped the letter into her bosom, and held out to Dumay that addressed to her father.

"I know you to be capable of anything, Dumay," said she; "but if you move a single step toward Monsieur de Canalis, I will take one out of this house and never come back!"

"You will kill your mother!" replied Dumay, who went to call his wife.

The poor mother had fainted away, stricken to the heart by Modeste's threatening speech.

"Good-by, wife," said the Breton, embracing the little American. "Save the mother; I am going to save the daughter."

He left Modeste and Madame Dumay with Madame Mignon, made his preparations in a few minutes, and went down to le Havre. An hour later he set off by post with the swiftness which passion or interest alone can give to the wheels.

Madame Mignon soon revived under her daughter's care, and went up to her room, leaning on Modeste's arm; the only reproach she uttered when they were alone was to say, "Unhappy child! what have you done? Why hide anything from me? Am I so stern?"

"Why, of course, I was going to tell you everything," replied the girl in tears.

She told her mother the whole story; she read her all the letters and replies; she plucked the rose of her poem to pieces, petal by petal, to lay in the heart of the kind German lady; this took up half the day. When her confession was ended, and she saw something like a smile on the lips of the too indulgent blind woman, she threw herself into her arms with tears.

"Oh, mother!" she cried, in the midst of her sobs, "you whose heart is of gold, and all poetry, and like some choice vessel moulded by God to contain the one pure and heavenly love that can fill a whole life!—you whom I long to imitate by loving nothing on earth but my husband—you must know how bitter are these tears which I shed at this moment, which fall wet on your hands. The butterfly with iridescent wings, that beautiful second soul which your daughter has cherished with maternal care—my love, my sacred love, that inspired and living mystery—has fallen into vulgar hands that will tear its wings and its veil under the cruel pretext of enlightening me, of inquiring whether genius is as correct as a banker, if

my Melchior is capable of amassing dividends, if he has some love affair to be unearthed, if he is not guilty in vulgar eyes of some youthful episode, which to our love is what a cloud is to the sun. What are they going to do? Here, feel my hand; I am in a fever! They will kill me!"

Modeste, seized by a deadly shivering fit, was obliged to go to bed, alarming her mother, Madame Latournelle, and Madame Dumay, who nursed her while the lieutenant was traveling to Paris, whither the logic of events transfers our tale for the moment.

Men who are truly modest, like Ernest de la Brière, and especially those who, though knowing their own value, are neither loved nor appreciated, will understand the infinite rapture in which the young secretary reveled as he read Modeste's letter. After discovering the wit and greatness of his mind, his young and guileless but wily mistress thought him handsome. This is the supremest flattery. Why? Because beauty is no doubt the Master's signature on the work into which He has infused His soul; it is the divinity made manifest; and to see it where it does not exist, to create it by the power of an enchanted eye, is—is it not?—the crowning magic of love.

And the poor young fellow could exclaim to himself with the ecstasy of an applauded author—

"At last I am loved!"

When once a woman, a courtesan, or an innocent girl has let the words escape her, "How handsome you are!" even if it be untrue, if the man allows the subtle poison of the words to enter his brain, he is thenceforth tied by eternal bonds to the bewitching liar, to the truthful or deluded woman; she is his world; he thirsts for this testimony; he would never weary of it, not even if he were a prince.

Ernest proudly paced his room; he stood in front of the mirror—three-quarter face, in profile; he tried to criticise his

own features, but a diabolical, insinuating voice said to him, "Modeste is right!" and he came back to the letter and read it again. He saw the heavenly fair one, he talked to her! Then, in the midst of his rapture, came the overwhelming thought, "She believes me to be Canalis, and she is a millionaire!"

All his happiness fell with a crash, as a man falls when, walking in his sleep, he has reached the ridge of a roof, and, hearing a voice, steps forward and is dashed to pieces on the stones.

"But for the halo of glory, I should be ugly!" cried he. "What a horrible predicament I have gotten myself into!"

La Brière was too thoroughly the man of his letters, too entirely the pure and noble soul he had shown in them, to hesitate at the voice of honor. He at once resolved to go and confess everything to Modeste's father if he were in Paris, and to inform Canalis fully of the outcome of their very Parisian practical joke. To this sensitive young fellow the vastness of Modeste's fortune was a casting reason. Above all, he would not be suspected of having used the stimulation of this correspondence, though on his side so perfectly sincere, for filching a fortune. Tears stood in his eyes as he walked from his rooms in the Rue Chantereine to Mongenod the banker's, whose prosperity, connections, and prospects were partly the work of the minister to whom he himself was indebted.

At the time when la Brière was closeted with the head of the house of Mongenod, and acquiring all the information he needed in his strange position, such a scene was taking place in Canalis' house as Dumay's hasty departure might have led us to expect.

Dumay, like a true soldier of the imperial school, whose blood had been boiling all through his journey, conceived of a poet as an irresponsible fellow, a man who fooled in rhyme, living in a garret, dressed in black cloth white at all the

seams, whose boots sometimes had soles, whose linen was anonymous, who always looked as if he had just dropped from the clouds, when he was not scribbling as intently as Butscha. But the ferment that muttered in his brain and heart received a sort of cold shower-bath when he reached the poet's handsome residence, saw a man cleaning a carriage in the courtyard, found himself in a splendid dining-room with another servant dressed like a banker, to whom the groom had referred him, who looked him over from head to foot as he said that Monsieur le Baron could not see any one.

"Monsieur le Baron has a meeting to-day," he added, "at the council of state."

"Am I right?" asked Dumay. "Is this the house of Monsieur de Canalis, who writes poetry?"

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis," said the footman, "is no doubt the great poet you mean; but is also master of appeals to the state council, and attached to the foreign office."

Dumay, who had come to box a rhymester's ears, to use his own contemptuous expression, had found a state functionary. The drawing-room where he was kept waiting, remarkable for its magnificence, presented to his contemplation the row of crosses that glittered on Canalis' evening coat, left by the servant over the back of a chair. Presently he was attracted by the sheen and workmanship of a silver-gilt cup, and the words, "The gift of MADAME," struck his eye. Opposite this, on a bracket, was a Sèvres vase, over which was engraved, "Given by Madame la Dauphine." These silent warnings restored Dumay to his commonsense, while the manservant was asking his master whether he could receive a stranger, who had come from le Havre on purpose to see him—his name Dumay.

"What is he like?" asked Canalis.

"Has a good hat and the red ribbon."

At a nod of assent, the man went out, and returned announcing—

"Monsieur Dumay."

When he heard his own name, when he stood before Canalis in a study as costly as it was elegant, his feet on a carpet quite as good as the best in the Mignons' old house, when he met the glance prepared by the poet, who was playing with the tassels of a sumptuous dressing-gown, Dumay was so absolutely dumfounded that he left the great man to speak first.

"To what, monsieur, do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"Monsieur," Dumay began, still standing.

"If you have much to say, pray be seated," said Canalis, interrupting him; and the poet sank back into his large easy-chair, and crossed his legs, raising the upper one to rock his foot on a level with his eye, while staring hard at Dumay, who, to use his own soldier's phrase, "felt like a dummy."

"I am listening, monsieur," said the poet. "My time is precious; I am due at the office——"

"Monsieur," returned Dumay, "I will be brief. You have bewitched—how I know not—a young lady at le Havre—handsome, rich, the last and only hope of two noble families, and I have come to ask you your intentions."

Canalis, who for the last three months had been absorbed by serious matters, who aimed at promotion to the grade of commander of the Legion of Honor and to be minister to a German court, had totally forgotten the letter from le Havre.

"I?" cried he.

"You," replied Dumay.

"Monsieur," said Canalis, smiling, "I know no more what you mean than if you were talking Hebrew. I bewitch a young girl? I, who——?" A lordly smile curled the poet's lip. "Come, monsieur. I am not a boy that I should amuse myself by stealing poor wild fruit when I have ample orchards open to me, where the finest peaches in the world ripen. All Paris knows where my affections are placed. That there should be at le Havre a young lady suffering from some admiration, of which I am wholly unworthy, for the

verses I have written, my dear sir, would not astonish me! Nothing is commoner. Look there! You see that handsome ebony-box inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and fitted with iron wrought as fine as lace. That coffer belonged to Pope Leo X.; it was given to me by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who had it from the King of Spain. I have devoted it to the preservation of all the letters I receive from every part of Europe, written by unknown women and girls. Oh! I have the greatest respect for those posies of flowers culled from the very soul, and sent to me in a moment of enthusiasm that is indeed worthy of all respect. Yes, to me the impulse of a heart is a noble and beautiful thing! Others, mocking spirits, screw up such notes to light their cigars, or give them to their wives for curl-papers; I—who am a bachelor, monsieur—have too much delicate feeling not to treasure these artless and disinterested offerings in a kind of tabernacle; indeed, I hoard them with no little reverence, and when I am dying I will see them burnt under my eyes. So much the worse for those who think me ridiculous! What is to be said? I am grateful by nature, and these testimonials help me to endure the criticisms and annoyances of a literary life. When I receive in my spine the broadside of an enemy in ambush behind a newspaper, I look at that chest and say to myself, 'There are, here and there, a few souls whose wounds have been healed, or beguiled or stanched by me——'"

This rodomontade, pronounced with the cleverness of a great actor, petrified the little cashier, whose eyes dilated while his astonishment amused the great poet.

"To you," the peacock went on, still spreading his tail, "out of respect for a position I can sympathize with, I can but propose that you should open that treasury and look there for your young lady; but I never forget names. I know what I am saying, and you are mistaken."

"And this is what happens to a poor girl in this gulf called Paris!" cried Dumay. "The idol of her parents, the delight

of her friends, the hope, the darling of them all; the pride of her family, for whom six persons have made a rampart of their hearts and their fortunes against disaster!"

Dumay paused, and then went on—

"Well, monsieur, you are a great poet, and I am but a poor soldier. For fifteen years, while I served my country in the ranks, I felt the wind of many a bullet in my face, I crossed Siberia, where I was kept a prisoner, the Russians flung me on a truck like a bale of goods, I have endured everything; I have seen no end of my comrades die—— And you, monsieur, have sent such a chill through my bones as I never felt before!"

Dumay believed that he had touched the poet; he had flattered him—an almost impossible achievement, for the ambitious man had by this time forgotten the first phial of precious balm that praise, it seemed now long past, had broken on his head.

"You see, my brave friend," said the poet solemnly, as he laid his hand on Dumay's shoulder, feeling it a strange thing that he should be able to make a soldier of the Empire shiver, "this girl is everything to you—— But to society, what is she? Nothing. If at this moment the most important mandarin in China is closing his eyes and putting the Empire into mourning, does that grieve you deeply? In India the English are killing thousands of men as good as we are; and at this moment, as I speak, the most charming woman is there being burnt—but you have had coffee for breakfast all the same? Indeed, at this minute, here in Paris, you may find several mothers of families lying on straw and bringing a child into the world without a rag to wrap it in! And here is some delicious tea in a cup that cost five louis, and I am writing verses to make the ladies of Paris exclaim, '*Charming, charming! divine, exquisite! it goes to the heart!*'

"Social nature, like mother nature herself, is great at forgetting. Ten years hence you will be amazed at the step you

have taken. You are in a city where we die, and marry, and worship each other at an assignation; where a girl suffocates herself, while a man of genius and his cargo of ideas full of humanitarian benefits go to the bottom, side by side, often under the same roof, and knowing nothing of each other. And you come and expect us to swoon with anguish at this commonplace question, 'Is a certain young person at le Havre this or that, or is she not?' Oh, you really are——"

"And you call yourself a poet!" cried Dumay. "But do you really feel nothing of what you depict?"

"If we felt all the misery or joy that we describe, we should be worn out in a few months, like old shoes," said the poet, smiling. "Listen, you shall not have come from le Havre to Paris, and to me, Canalis, without having something to take back with you. Soldier!"—and Canalis had the figure and gesture of an Homeric hero—"learn this from the poet, 'Every noble feeling in each of us is a poem so essentially individual that our best friend, our self, takes no interest in it. It is a treasure belonging to each alone——'"

"Forgive me for interrupting you," said Dumay, who gazed at Canalis with horror, "but have you been to le Havre?"

"I spent a night and day there in the spring of 1824 on my way to London."

"You are a man of honor," Dumay went on. "Can you give me your word of honor that you do not know Mademoiselle Modeste Mignon?"

"This is the first time I ever heard her name," replied Canalis.

"Oh, monsieur," cried Dumay, "into what dark intrigue am I about to plunge? May I count on you to help me in my inquiries? For some one, I am certain, has been making use of your name. You ought to have received a letter yesterday from le Havre."

"I have received nothing! You may be sure, monsieur,

that I will do all that lies in my power to be of service to you."

Dumay took leave, his heart full of anxiety, believing that hideous little Butscha had hidden himself in the semblance of the great poet to captivate Modeste; while Butscha, on the contrary, as keen and clever as a prince who avenges himself, sharper than a spy, was making inquisition into the poet's life and actions, escaping detection by his insignificance like an insect working its way into the young wood of a tree.

The Breton had but just left when la Brière came into his friend's room. Canalis naturally mentioned the visit of this man from le Havre.

"Hah!" said Ernest, "Modeste Mignon! I have come on purpose to speak about that affair."

"Bless me!" cried Canalis, "do you mean to say I have made a conquest by proxy?"

"Why, yes, that is the turning-point of the drama. My friend, I am loved by the sweetest girl in the world, beautiful enough to shine among the beauties of Paris, with a heart and education worthy of Clarissa Harlowe; she has seen me, she likes my looks—and she believes me to be the great poet Canalis.

"Nor is this all: Modeste Mignon is of good birth, and Mongenod has just told me that her father, the Comte de la Bastie, must have a fortune of something like six millions of francs. This father has come home within three days, and I have just begged him to arrange an interview with me, at two o'clock—through Mongenod, who in his note mentioned that it concerned his daughter's happiness. You will understand that before meeting the father I was bound to tell you everything."

"Among all the blossoms that open to the sunshine of fame," said Canalis with emphasis, "there is one glorious plant which, like the orange, bears its golden fruit amid the

thousand united perfumes of wit and beauty! one elegant shrub, one true passion, one perfect happiness—and it has evaded me!" Canalis kept his eyes on the carpet that Ernest might not read them. "How," he went on after a pause, to recover his presence of mind, "how is it possible, among the intoxicating scents of these fancy-paper notes, and these phrases that mount to the brain, to detect the genuine heart—the girl, the woman, in whom true love is hidden under the livery of flattery, who loves us for ourselves, and who offers us happiness? No one could do it but an angel or a demon, and I am only an ambitious master of appeals!

"Ah, my dear fellow, fame transforms us into a butt, a target for a thousand arrows. One of us owed his marriage to a copy of hydraulic verses; and I, even more ingratiating, more the ladies' man than he, shall have missed my chance —for you love this poor girl?" said he, looking intently at la Brière.

"Oh!" cried la Brière.

"Well, then, be happy, Ernest," said the poet, taking his friend's arm and leaning on it. "As it turns out, I shall not have been ungrateful to you! You are handsomely rewarded for your devotion, for I will be generously helpful to your happiness."

Canalis was furious, but he could not behave otherwise, so he took the benefit of his ill-luck by using it as a pedestal. A tear rose to the young secretary's eye; he threw his arms about Canalis and embraced him.

"Oh, Canalis, I did not half know you!"

"What did you expect? It takes time to travel around the world," replied the poet with emphatic irony.

"Consider," said la Brière, "that immense fortune?——"

"Well, my friend, will it not be in good hands?" cried Canalis, pointing his effusiveness by a charming gesture.

"Melchior," said la Briere, "I am yours in life and death."

He wrung the poet's hands and went away hastily; he was eager to see Monsieur Mignon.

At this hour the Comte de la Bastie was suffering all the sorrows that had been lurking for him as their prey. He had learned from his daughter's letter the facts of Bettina Caroline's death and her mother's blindness; and Dumay had just told him the story of the terrible imbroglio of Modeste's love affair.

"Leave me to myself," he said to his faithful friend.

When the lieutenant had closed the door, the unhappy father threw himself on a couch and lay there, his head in his hands, shedding the few thin tears that lie without falling under the eyelids of a man of fifty-six, wetting them, but drying quickly and rising again, the last dews of the autumn of human life.

"To have children you love and a wife you adore is to have many hearts and offer them all to the dagger!" cried he, starting to his feet with a furious bound and pacing the room. "To be a father is to give one's self over to misfortune, bound hand and foot. If I meet that fellow d'Estourny I will kill him. Daughters! Who would have daughters? One gets hold of a scoundrel; and the other, my Modeste, of what? A coward, who deludes her under the gilt-paper armor of a poet. If only it were Canalis! There would be no great harm done. But this Scapin of a lover! I will throttle him with my own hands!" said he to himself, with an involuntary gesture of energetic atrocity. "And what then," he thought, "if my child should die of grief?"

Mechanically he looked out of the window of the Hôtel des Princes, and came back to sit down on the divan, where he remained motionless. The fatigue of six voyages to the Indies, the anxieties of investments, the dangers he had met and escaped, care and sorrow had silvered Charles Mignon's hair. His fine military face, clean in outline, was bronzed

by the sun of Malaysia, China, and Asia Minor, and had assumed an imposing expression, which grief at this moment made sublime.

"And Mongenod tells me I can perfectly trust the young man who is to come to speak to me about my daughter!——"

Ernest de la Brière was just then announced by one of the servants whom the Comte de la Bastie had attached to him in the course of these four years, and had picked out from the crowd of men under him.

"You come, monsieur, with an introduction from my friend Mongenod?" said he.

"Yes," replied Ernest, gazing timidly at a face as gloomy as Othello's. "My name is Ernest de la Brière, connected, monsieur, with the family of the late prime minister; I was his private secretary when he was in office. At his fall, his excellency was good enough to place me in the court of exchequer, where I am now a first-class referendary, and where I may rise to be a master——"

"And what has all this to do with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked Charles Mignon.

"Monsieur, I love her, and it is my unhoped-for happiness to be loved by her. Listen, monsieur," said Ernest, interrupting a terrible movement on the part of the angry father, "I have the strangest confession to make to you, the most ignominious for a man of honor. And the worst punishment of my conduct, which perhaps was natural, is not this revelation to you—I dread the daughter even more than the father."

Ernest then told the prologue of this domestic drama, quite simply, and with the dignity of sincerity; he did not omit the twenty and odd letters they had exchanged—he had brought them with him—nor the interview he had just had with Canalis. When the father had read all these letters, the poor lover, pale and suppliant, quaked before the fiery looks of the Provençal.

"Well, monsieur," said Mignon, "in all this, there is only one mistake, but it is all-important. My daughter has not six millions of francs; her fortune at most is two hundred thousand francs in settlement, and very doubtful expectations."

"Oh, monsieur!" cried Ernest, throwing his arms around Charles Mignon and hugging him, "you relieve me of a load that oppressed me. Now, perhaps, nothing will come in the way of my happiness! I have interest; I shall soon be master of the exchequer. If she had but ten thousand francs, if I had to accept nominal settlements, Mademoiselle Mignon would still be the wife of my choice; and to make her happy, as happy as you have made yours, to be a true son to you—yes, monsieur, for my father is dead—this is the deepest wish of my heart."

Charles Mignon drew back three steps, and fixed on la Brière a look that sank into the young man's eyes, as a poniard goes into its sheath; then he stood silent, reading in those fascinated eyes and on that eager countenance the most perfect candor and the purest truthfulness.

"Is fate at last wearied out?" said he to himself in an undertone. "Can I have found a paragon son-in-law in this youth?" He walked up and down the room in great excitement.

"Well, monsieur," he said at length, "you owe implicit obedience to the sentence you have come to ask, for otherwise you would at this moment be acting a mere farce."

"Indeed, monsieur——"

"Listen to me," said the father, nailing la Brière to the spot by a look. "I will be neither severe, nor hard, nor unjust. You must take the disadvantages with the advantages of the false position in which you have placed yourself. My daughter imagines that she is in love with one of the great poets of our day, whose fame chiefly has fascinated her. Well, then, ought not I, as her father, to enable her to choose

between the celebrity which has seemed a lighthouse to her, and the humble reality thrown to her by chance in the irony it so often allows itself? Must she not be free to choose between you and Canalis. I trust to your honor to be silent as to what I have just told you concerning the state of my affairs. You and your friend, the Baron de Canalis, must come to spend the last fortnight of this month of October at le Havre. My house will be open to you both; my daughter will have the opportunity of knowing you. Remember, you yourself are to bring your rival, and to allow him to believe all the fables that may be current as to the Comte de la Bastie's millions. I shall be at le Havre by to-morrow, and shall expect you three days later. Good-morning, monsieur."

Poor la Brière very slowly made his way back to Canalis. At that moment the poet, face to face with himself, could give himself up to the torrent of reflections that flow from that "second thought" which Talleyrand so highly praised. The first thought is the impulse of nature, the second that of society.

"A girl with six millions of francs! And my eyes failed to discern the glitter of that gold through the darkness! With such a fortune as that, I can be a peer of France, count, ambassador! I have answered the most ordinary women, simpletons, intriguing girls who only wanted an autograph! And I rebelled against these *bal masqué* wiles on the very day when heaven sent me a chosen soul, an angel with wings of gold! Pooh! I will write a sublime poem, and the chance will come again! What luck for that little la Brière, who spread his tail in my sunbeams! And what plagiary. I am the model, and he is to be the statue! This is playing the fable of 'Bertrand and Raton.' Six millions, and an angel, a Mignon de la Bastie! An aristocratic angel, who loves poetry and the poet! And I meanwhile display my muscles as a strong man, perform athletics, like Alcides, to astonish

this champion of physical strength by moral force—this brave soldier full of fine feeling, this young girl's friend, who will tell her I have a soul of iron. I am playing Napoleon, when I ought to show myself as a seraph! I shall have won a friend perhaps, and have paid dear for him; but friendship is a fine thing. Six millions—that is the price of a friend; a man cannot have many at that figure!"

At this last point of exclamation la Brière came into his friend's room; he was depressed.

"Well, what is the matter?" said Canalis.

"The father insists that his daughter shall be enabled to choose between the two Canalis——"

"Poor boy!" said the poet, laughing. "A clever man is that father!"

"I have pledged my honor to take you to le Havre," said la Brière dolefully.

"My dear boy," said Canalis, "if your honor is at stake, you may depend upon me. I will ask for a month's leave of absence."

"Oh, Modeste is lovely!" cried la Brière in despair, "and you will easily extinguish me! Still, I was amazed to find good fortune coming my way; I said to myself, it is all a mistake!"

"Pooh! We shall see," said Canalis with ruthless cheerfulness.

That evening, after dinner, Charles Mignon and his cashier were flying, at the cost of three francs a stage to the postillion, from Paris to le Havre. The father had completely allayed his watch-dog's alarms as to Modeste's love affairs, had released him from his responsibilities, and reassured him as to Butscha's proceedings.

"Everything is for the best, my good old friend," said Charles, who had made inquiries of Mongenod as to Canalis and la Brière. "We have two players for one part," he added, laughing.

At the same time, he enjoined absolute silence on his old comrade as to the comedy about to be played at the chalet, and his gentle revenge, or, if you will, the lesson to be given by a father to his child. From Paris to le Havre was one long dialogue between the friends, by which the colonel learned the smallest events that had happened in his family during the past four years; and Charles told Dumay that Desplein, the great surgeon, was to come before the end of the month to examine the Countess' eyes and decide whether it would be possible to remove the cataract and restore her sight.

A few minutes before the breakfast hour at the chalet, the cracking of a whip, by a postillion counting on a large gratuity, announced the return of the two soldiers. Only the joy of a father coming home to his family after a long absence would give rise to such a detonation, and all the women were standing at the little gate.

There are so many fathers, and so many children—more fathers perhaps than children—who can enter the excitement of such a meeting, that literature is never required to depict it; happily! for the finest words, and poetry itself, are inadequate to such emotions. Perhaps, indeed, the sweeter emotions have no literary side.

Not a word was spoken that day that could disturb the happiness of the Mignon family. There was a truce between the father, the mother, and the daughter as to the mysterious love affair which had paled Modeste's cheek. She was up to-day for the first time. The colonel, with the delicate tenderness that characterizes a true soldier, sat all the time by his wife's side, her hand constantly held in his, and he watched Modeste, never tired of admiring her refined, elegant, and poetic beauty. Is it not by such small things that we know a man of true feeling?

Modeste, fearful of troubling the melancholy happiness of her father and mother, came from time to time to kiss the

traveler's brow, and by kissing him so often seemed to wish to kiss him for two.

"Ah, darling child! I understand you," said her father, pressing Modeste's hand at a moment when she was smothering him with affection.

"Hush!" whispered Modeste in his ear, pointing to her mother.

Dumay's rather perfidious silence left Modeste very uneasy as to the results of his journey to Paris; she now and then stole a look at the lieutenant, but could not penetrate that tough skin. The colonel, as a prudent father, wished to study his only daughter's nature, and, above all, to consult his wife, before proceeding to a discussion on which the happiness of the whole family would depend.

"To-morrow, my dearest child, rise early," said he at night, "and, if it is fine, we will go for a walk together on the seashore. We have to talk over your poems, Mademoiselle de la Bastie."

These words, spoken with a smile that was reflected on Dumay's lips, were all Modeste could know; still, this was enough to allay her anxiety and to make her too curious to get to sleep till late, so busy was her fancy.

Next morning Modeste was dressed and ready before the colonel.

"You know everything, my dear father," said she, as soon as they had started on their way to the sea.

"I know everything—and a good many things that you do not know," replied he.

Thereupon the father and daughter walked some few steps in silence.

"Now, tell me, my child, how a daughter so worshiped by her mother could take so decisive a step as to write to a man unknown to her without asking that mother's advice?"

"Well, papa, because mamma would not have allowed it."

"And do you think, my child, that it was right? Though you have inevitably been left to bring yourself up, how is it that your reason or your insight — if modesty failed you—did not tell you that to act in such a way was to throw yourself at a man's head? Can it be that my daughter, my only child, lacks pride and delicacy? Oh! Modeste, you gave your father two hours of hell's torments in Paris; for, in point of fact your conduct, morally, has been the same as Bettina's, without having the excuse of seduction; you have been a coquette in cold blood, and that is love without heart, the worst vice of the Frenchwoman."

"I—without pride?" said Modeste in tears. "But he has never seen me!"

"*He* knows your name."

"I never let him know it till the moment when our eyes had set the seal to three months of correspondence, during which our souls had spoken to each other!"

"Yes, my dear mistaken angel, you have brought a kind of reason to bear on this madness which has compromised your happiness and your family."

"Well, after all, papa, happiness is the justification of such boldness," said she, with a touch of temper.

"Ah! Then it is merely boldness?" cried her father.

"Such boldness as my mother allowed herself," she answered hastily.

"Refractory child! Your mother, after meeting me at a ball, told her father, who adored her, the same evening that she believed she could be happy with me. Now, be candid, Modeste; is there any resemblance between love, at first sight it is true, but under a father's eye, and the mad act of writing to an unknown man?"

"An unknown man? Nay, papa, one of our greatest poets, whose character and life are under the light of day, exposed to gossip and calumny; a man clothed in glory, to whom, my dear father, I was but a dramatic, literary personage—a

girl of Shakespeare's—until the moment when I felt I must know whether the man was as attractive as his soul is beautiful."

"Bless me, my poor child, you are dreaming of poetry in connection with marriage. But if in all ages girls have been cloistered in the family; if God and social law have placed them under the stern yoke of parental sanction, it is precisely and on purpose to spare them the misfortunes to which the poetry that fascinates you must lead while it dazzles you, and which you therefore cannot estimate at its true worth. Poetry is one of the graces of life; it is not the whole of life."

"Papa, it is an action for ever undecided before the tribunal of facts, for there is a constant struggle between our hearts and the family authority."

"Woe to the girl who should find happiness by means of such resistance!" said the colonel gravely. "In 1813 one of my fellow-officers, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, married his cousin against her father's warnings, and the household paid dearly for the obstinacy that a girl could mistake for love. In these matters the family is supreme."

"My fiancé has told me all that," said she. "He assumed the part of Orgon for some time, and had the courage to run down the personal character of poets."

"I have read the correspondence," said her father, with a meaning smile that made Modeste uneasy. "And I may, on that point, remark that your last letter would hardly be allowable in a girl who had been seduced—in a Julie d'Étanges. Good God! what mischief comes of romances!"

"If they were never written, my dear father, we should still enact them. It is better to read them. There are fewer romantic adventures now than in the time of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., when fewer novels were published. Beside, if you have read our letters, you must have perceived that I have found you for a son-in-law the most respectful son, the most angelic nature, the strictest honesty, and that we love each other at

least as much as you and mamma did. Well, I will admit that the affair has not been conducted exactly as etiquette requires. I made a mistake, if you like——"

"I have read your letters," repeated her father, interrupting her, "so I know how he justified you in your own eyes for a step which might perhaps be excusable in a woman who knows life, who is carried away by passion, but which in a girl of twenty is a monstrous fault——"

"A fault in common people's eyes, in those of narrow-minded Gobenheims, who measure out life with a T-square! But do not let us go beyond the artistic and poetic world, papa. We young girls live between two alternatives: we may show a man that we love him by mincing graces, or we may go to meet him frankly. And is not this last method really great and noble? We French girls are disposed of by our family like merchandise, at three months' date, sometimes much sooner, like Mademoiselle Vilquin; but in England, Switzerland, and Germany they are married more nearly on the system I have adopted. What can you say to that? Am I not half-German?"

"Child," exclaimed the colonel, looking at his daughter, "the superiority of France lies precisely in the commonsense, the strict logic to which our splendid language compels the mind. France is the reason of the world! England and Germany are romantic in this point; but even there the great families follow our custom. You girls would rather not believe, then, that your parents, who know life, have the charge of your souls and your happiness, and that it is their duty to steer you clear of the rocks! Good God!" he went on, "is this their fault or ours? Ought we to bend our children under a yoke of iron? Must we always be punished for the tenderness which prompts us to make them happy, which, unfortunately, makes them heart of our heart!"

As she heard this ejaculation, spoken almost with tears, Modeste cast a side glance at her father.

"Is it wrong in a girl whose heart is free," said she, "to choose for her husband a man who is not only charming in himself, but who is also a man of genius, of good birth, and in a fine position—a gentleman as gentle as myself?"

"Then you love him?" said the colonel.

"I tell you, father," said she, laying her head on his breast, "if you do not want to see me die——"

"That is enough," said the colonel, "your passion is, I see, unchangeable."

"Unchangeable."

"Nothing could move you?"

"Nothing in the world."

"You can conceive of no alteration, no betrayal," her father went on. "You love him for better, for worse, for the sake of his personal charms; and if he should be a d'Estourny, you still would love him?"

"Oh, papa, you do not know your child! Could I love a coward, a man devoid of truth and honor—a gallows-bird?"

"Then supposing you have been deceived?"

"By that charming young fellow, so candid—almost melancholy? You are laughing at me, or you have not seen him."

"I see; happily your love is not so imperative as you say. I have suggested conditions which might modify your poem. Well, then, you will admit that fathers are of some use?"

"You wanted to give me a lesson, papa—a sort of object-lesson, it would seem."

"Poor misled girl!" said her father severely; "the lesson is not of my giving; I have nothing to do with it beyond trying to soften the blow."

"Say no more, papa; do not trifle with my very life," said Modeste, turning pale.

"Nay, my child, summon up your courage. It is you who have trifled with life, and life now laughs you to scorn."

Modeste looked at her father in bewilderment.

"Listen; if the young man you love, whom you saw in church at le Havre four days ago, were a contemptible wretch——"

"It is not true!" said she. "That pale, dark face, so noble and full of poetry——"

"Is a lie!" said the colonel, interrupting her. "He is no more Monsieur de Canalis than I am that fisherman hauling up his sail to go out——"

"Do you know what you are killing in me?" returned Modeste.

"Be comforted, my child; though fate has made your fault its own punishment, the mischief is not irreparable. The youth you saw, with whom you have exchanged hearts by correspondence, is an honest fellow; he came to me to confess his dilemma. He loves you, and I should not object to him as a son-in-law."

"And if he is not Canalis, who is he?" asked Modeste, in a broken voice.

"His secretary. His name is Ernest de la Brière. He is not of superior birth, but he is one of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like. And what does it matter to us, after all? You have seen him; nothing can change your feelings; you have chosen him, you know his soul—it is as noble as he is good-looking."

The Comte de la Bastie was checked by a sigh from Modeste. The poor child, perfectly white, her eyes fixed on the sea, and as rigid as the dead, had been struck as by a pistol-shot by the words, "*One of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like.*"

"Deceived!" she said at last.

"As your poor sister was, but less seriously."

"Let us go home, papa," she said, rising from the knoll on which they had been sitting. "Listen, father; I swear before God to obey your wishes, whatever they may be, in the business of marriage."

"Then you have already ceased to love?" asked her father sarcastically.

"I loved a true man without a falsehood on his face, as honest as you yourself, incapable of disguising himself like an actor, of dressing himself up in another man's glory."

"You said that nothing could move you!" said the colonel ironically.

"Oh, do not make game of me!" cried she, clasping her hands, and looking at her father in an agony of entreaty. "You do not know how you are torturing my heart and my dearest beliefs by your satire——"

"God forbid! I have said the exact truth."

"You are very good, father," she replied, after a pause, with a certain solemnity.

"And he has your letters! Heh?" said Charles Mignon. "If those crazy effusions of your soul had fallen into the hands of one of those poets who, according to Dumay, use them for pipe-lights——"

"Oh, that is going too far."

"So Canalis told him."

"He saw Canalis?"

"Yes," replied the colonel.

They walked on a little way in silence.

"That, then," said Modeste, when they had gone a few steps, "was why that gentleman spoke so ill of poets and poetry! Why did that little secretary talk of?—— But, however," she added, interrupting herself, "were not his virtues, his qualities, his fine sentiments, a mere epistolary make-up? The man who can steal another one's fame and name may very well——"

"Pick locks, rob the treasury, murder on the highway," said Charles Mignon, smiling. "That is just like you—you girls, with your uncompromising feelings and your ignorance of life. A man who can deceive a woman has either escaped the scaffold or must end there."

This raillery checked Modeste's effervescence, and again they were both silent.

"My child," the colonel added, "men in the world—as in nature, for that matter—are bound to try to win your hearts, and you to defend them. You have reversed the position. Is that well? In a false position everything is false. Yours, then, was the first wrong step. No, a man is not a monster because he tries to attract a woman; our rights allow us to be the aggressors, with all the consequences, short of crime and baseness. A man may still have virtues even after throwing over a woman, for this simply means that he has failed to find the treasure he sought in her; while no woman but a queen, an actress, or a woman so far above the man in rank that to him she is like a queen, can take the initiative without incurring much blame. But a girl! She is false to everything that God has given her, every flower of saintliness, dignity, and sweetness, whatever grace, poetry, or precaution she may infuse into the act."

"To seek the master and find the servant! To play the old farce of Love and Chance on one side only!" she exclaimed, with bitter feeling. "Oh, I shall never hold up my head again!"

"Foolish child! Monsieur Ernest de la Brière is, in my eyes, at least the equal of Monsieur de Canalis; he has been private secretary to a prime minister, he is referendary to the court of exchequer, he is a man of heart, he adores you—but he does not write verses. No, I confess it, he is not a poet; but he may have a heart full of poetry. However, my poor child," he added, in reply to Modeste's face of disgust, "you will see them both—the false and the real Canalis——"

"Oh, papa!"

"Did you not swear to obey me in everything that concerns the *business* of your marriage? Well, you may choose between them the man you prefer for your husband. You began with a poem, you may end with a page of bucolics by

trying to detect the true nature of these gentlemen in some rustic excursions, a shooting or a fishing party."

Modeste bent her head and returned to the chalet with her father, listening to what he said, and answering in monosyllables. She had fallen humiliated into the depths of a bog, from the Alp where she fancied she had flown up to an eagle's nest. To adopt the poetical phraseology of an author of that period, "After feeling the soles of her feet too tender to tread on the glass sherds of reality, fancy, which had united every characteristic of woman in that fragile form, from the day-dreams of a modest girl, all strewn with violets, to the unbridled desires of a courtesan, had now led her into the midst of her enchanted gardens, where, hideous surprise! instead of an exquisite blossom, she found growing from the soil the hairy and twisted limbs of the Mandragora."

From the mystic heights of her love Modeste had dropped on to the dull, flat road, lying between ditches and ploughed lands—the road, in short, that is paved with vulgarity. What girl with an ardent spirit but would be broken by such a fall? At whose feet had she cast her promises?

The Modeste who returned to the chalet bore no more resemblance to the girl who had gone out two hours before, than the actress in the street resembles the heroine on the stage. She sank into a state of apathy that was painful to behold. The sun was darkened, nature was under a shroud, the flowers had no message for her. Like every girl of a vehement disposition, she drank a little too deeply of the cup of disenchantment. She rebelled against reality, without choosing as yet to bend her neck to the yoke of the family and of society; she thought it too heavy, too hard, too oppressive. She would not even listen to the comfort offered by her father and mother, and felt an indescribable savage delight in abandoning herself wholly and unrestrainedly to her mental sufferings.

"Then poor Butscha was right!" she exclaimed one evening.

This speech shows how far she had traveled in so short a time on the barren plains of reality, guided by her deep dejection. Grief, when it comes of the upheaval of all our hopes, is an illness; it often ends in death. It would be no mean occupation for modern physiology to investigate the process and means by which a thought can produce the same deadly effects as a poison; how despair can destroy the appetite, injure the pylorus, and change all the functions of the strongest vitality. This was the case with Modeste. In three days she presented an image of morbid melancholy; she sang no more, it was impossible to make her smile; her parents and friends were alarmed. Charles Mignon, uneasy at seeing nothing of the two young men, was thinking of going to Paris, remind la Brière of his promise, and fetch them; but on the fourth day Monsieur Latournelle had news of them, and this was how:

Canalis, immensely tempted by such a rich marriage, would neglect no means of outdoing la Brière, while Ernest could not complain of his having violated the laws of friendship. The poet thought that nothing put a lover at a greater disadvantage in a young lady's eyes than figuring in an inferior position; so he proposed, in the most innocent manner possible, that he and la Brière should keep house together, taking a little country place at Ingouville, where they might live for a month under pretext of recruiting their health.

As soon as la Brière had consented to this proposal, at first regarding it as very natural, Canalis insisted on his being his guest, and made all the arrangements himself. He sent his manservant to le Havre, desiring him to apply to Monsieur Latournelle for the choice of a country cottage at Ingouville, thinking that the notary would certainly talk over the matter with the Mignon family. Ernest and Canalis, it may be supposed, had discussed every detail of their adven-

ture; and la Brière, always prolix, had given his rival a thousand valuable hints.

The servant, understanding his master's intentions, carried them out to admiration; he trumpeted the advent of the great poet, to whom his doctors had ordered some sea-baths to recruit him after the double fatigues of politics and literature. This grand personage required a house of at least so many rooms; for he was bringing his secretary, his cook, two menservants, and a coachman, not to mention Monsieur Germain Bonnet, his body-servant. The traveling carriage the poet selected and hired for a month was very neat, and could serve for making some excursions; and Germain was in search of two saddle-horses for hire in the neighborhood, as Monsieur le Baron and his secretary were fond of horse exercise. In the presence of little Latournelle, Germain, as he went over various houses, spoke much of the secretary, and rejected two villas on the ground that Monsieur de la Brière would not be well accommodated.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he, "regards his secretary as his best friend. Oh, I should catch it handsomely if Monsieur de la Brière was not as well served as Monsieur le Baron himself. And, after all, Monsieur de la Brière is referendary to the court of exchequer."

Germain was never seen dressed otherwise than in a suit of black, with good gloves and boots, turned out like a gentleman. Imagine the effect he produced, and the notion that was formed of the great poet from this specimen. A clever man's servant becomes clever too; the master's cleverness presently "runs" and colors the man. Germain did not overact his part; he was straightforward and genial, as Canalis had instructed him to be. Poor la Brière had no suspicion of the injury Germain was doing him, or of the depreciation to which he had exposed himself; for some echoes of public report arose from the lower depths to Modeste's ears. Thus Canalis was bringing his friend in his retinue, in his carriage;

and Ernest's simple nature did not allow him to perceive his false position soon enough to remedy it.

The delay which so provoked Charles Mignon was caused by the poet's desire to have his arms painted on the doors of the chaise, and by his orders to the tailor; for Canalis took in the wide world of such trivialities, of which the least may influence a girl.

"Make yourself easy," said Latournelle to the colonel on the fifth day. "Monsieur de Canalis' man came to a determination this morning. He has taken Madame Amaury's cottage at Sanvic, furnished, for seven hundred francs, and has written to his master that he can start, and will find everything ready on his arrival. So the gentlemen will be here by Sunday. I have also had this note from Butscha. Here—it is not long: 'My dear master, I cannot get back before Sunday. Between this and then I must get some important information which nearly concerns some one in whom you are interested.'"

The announcement of this arrival did not make Modeste at all less sad; the sense of a fall, of humiliation, still held sway over her, and she was not such a born coquette as her father thought her. There is a charming and permissible kind of flirtation, the coquetry of the soul, which might be called the good breeding of love; and Charles Mignon, when reproving his daughter, had failed to distinguish between the desire to please and the factitious love of the mind, between the craving of love and self-interest. Just like a soldier of the Empire, he saw in the letters he had so hastily read a girl throwing herself at a poet's head; but in many letters—omitted here for the sake of brevity—a connoisseur would have admired the maidenly and graceful reserve which Modeste had immediately substituted for the aggressive and frivolous pertness of her first effusions—a transition very natural in a woman.

On one point her father had been cruelly right. It was her last letter—in which Modeste, carried away by threefold love,

had spoken as though their marriage was a decided thing, which really brought her to shame. Still, she thought her father very hard, very cruel, to compel her to receive a man so unworthy of her, toward whom her soul had flown almost unveiled. She had questioned Dumay as to his interview with the poet; she had ingeniously extracted from him every detail, and she could not think Canalis such a barbarian as the lieutenant thought him. She could smile at the fine papal chest containing the letters of the *mille et trois* ladies of this literary Don Giovanni. Again and again she was on the point of saying to her father, "I am not the only girl who writes to him; the cream of womankind sends leaves for the poet's crown of bay."

In the course of this week Modeste's character underwent a transformation. This catastrophe—and it was a great one to so poetical a nature—aroused her latent acumen and spirit of mischief, and her suitors were to find her a formidable adversary. For, in fact, in any girl, if her heart is chilled, her head grows clear; she then observes everything with a certain swiftness of judgment and a spirit of mockery, such as Shakespeare has admirably painted in the person of Beatrice in "Much Ado about Nothing." Modeste was seized by intense disgust of mankind, since the most distinguished of them had deceived her hopes. In love, what a woman mistakes for disgust is simply seeing clearly; but in matters of feeling no woman, especially no young girl, ever sees truly. When she ceases to admire, she contemns. So Modeste, after going through fearful tortures of mind, inevitably put on the armor on which, as she declared, she had stamped the word Contempt; thenceforward she could look on as a disinterested spectator at what she called the Farce of Suitors; although she filled the part of leading lady. More especially was she bent on pertinaciously humiliating and scornfully treating Monsieur de la Brière.

"Modeste is saved," said Madame Mignon to her husband

with a smile. "She means to be revenged on the false Canalis by trying to fall in love with the true one."

This was, indeed, Modeste's plan. It was so obvious that her mother, to whom she confided her vexation, advised her to treat Monsieur de la Brière with oppressive civility.

"These two young fellows," said Madame Latournelle on the Saturday, "have no suspicion of the troop of spies at their heels, for here are eight of us to keep an eye on them."

"What, my dear—two?" cried little Latournelle; "there are three of them! Gobenheim is not here yet, so I may speak."

Modeste had looked up, and all the others, following her example, gazed at the notary.

"A third lover, and he is a lover, has put himself on the list——"

"Bless me!" said Charles Mignon.

"But he is no less a person," the notary went on pompously, "than his lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, Marquis de Saint-Séver, Duc de Nivron, Comte de Bayeux, Vicomte d'Essigny, High Equerry of France, and Peer of the Realm, Knight of the Orders of the Spur and of the Golden Fleece, Grandee of Spain, and son of the last Governor of Normandy. He saw Mademoiselle Modeste when he was staying with the Vilquins, and he then only regretted—as his notary told me, who arrived yesterday from Bayeux—that she was not rich enough for him, since his father, on his return from exile, had found nothing left but his château of Hérouville, graced by his sister's presence. The young Duke is three-and-thirty. I am definitely charged to make overtures, Monsieur le Comte," added Latournelle, turning respectfully to the colonel.

"Ask Modeste," said her father, "whether she wishes to have another bird in her aviary; for, so far as I am concerned, I am quite willing that this fine gentleman equerry should pay his addresses to her."

Notwithstanding the care with which Charles Mignon avoided seeing anybody, for he stayed in the chalet and never went out but with Modeste; Gobenheim, whom they could hardly cease to receive at the chalet, had gossiped about Dumay's wealth; for Dumay, a second father to Modeste, had said to Gobenheim when he left his service, "I shall be my colonel's steward, and all my money, excepting what my wife may keep, will go to my little Modeste's children."

So every one at le Havre had echoed the plain question that Latournelle had asked himself—

"Must not Monsieur Charles Mignon have made an enormous fortune if Dumay's share amounts to six hundred thousand francs and if Dumay is to be his steward?"

"Monsieur Mignon came home in a ship of his own," said the gossips on 'Change, "loaded with indigo. The freight alone, not to mention the vessel, is worth more than he gives out to be his fortune."

The colonel would not discharge the servants he had so carefully chosen during his travels, so he was obliged to hire a house for six months in the lower part of Ingouville; he had a body-servant, a cook, and a coachman—both negroes—and a mulatto woman and two mulatto men on whose faithfulness he could rely. The coachman was inquiring for riding horses for mademoiselle and his master, and for carriage horses for the chaise in which the colonel and the lieutenant had come home. This traveling carriage, purchased in Paris, was in the latest fashion, and bore the arms of la Bastie with a Count's coronet. All these things, mere trifles in the eyes of a man who had been living for four years in the midst of the unbounded luxury of the Indies, of the Hong merchants, and the English at Canton, were the subject of comment to the traders of le Havre and the good folks of Graville and Ingouville. Within five days there was a hubbub of talk which flashed across Normandy like a fired train of gunpowder.

"Monsieur Mignon has come home from China with mil-

lions," was said at Rouen, "and it would seem that he has become a Count in the course of his travels."

"But he was Comte de la Bastie before the revolution," somebody remarked.

"So a Liberal, who for five-and twenty years was known as Charles Mignon, is now called Monsieur le Comte! What are we coming to?"

Thus, in spite of the reserve of her parents and intimates, Modeste was regarded as the richest heiress in Normandy, and all eyes could now see her merits. The Duc d'Hérouville's aunt and sister, in full drawing-room assembly at Bayeux, confirmed Monsieur Charles Mignon's right to the arms and title of Count conferred on Cardinal Mignon, whose cardinal's hat and cords were, out of gratitude, assumed in place of a crest and supporters. These ladies had caught sight of Mademoiselle de la Bastie from the Vilquins', and their solicitude for the impoverished head of the house at once scented an opportunity.

"If Mademoiselle de la Bastie is as rich as she is handsome," said the young Duke's aunt, "she will be the best match in the province. And she, at any rate, is of noble birth!"

The last words were a shot at the Vilquins, with whom they could not come to terms after enduring the humiliation of paying them a visit.

Such were the little events which led to the introduction of another actor in this domestic drama, contrary to all the laws of Aristotle and Horace. But the portrait and biography of this personage, so tardy in his appearance, will not detain us long, since he is of the smallest importance. Monsieur le Duc will not fill more space here than he will in history.

Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, the fruit of the matrimonial autumn of the last Governor of Normandy, was born at Vienna in 1796, during the emigration. The old marshal,

who returned with the King in 1814, died in 1819 without seeing his son married, though he was Duc de Nivron; he had nothing to leave him but the immense château of Hérouville, with the park, some outlying ground and a farm, all painfully repurchased, and worth about fifteen thousand francs a year. Louis XVIII. gave the young Duke the post of master of the horse; and under Charles X. he received the allowance of twelve thousand francs a year granted to impecunious peers.

But what were twenty-seven thousand francs a year for such a family? In Paris, indeed, the young Duke had the use of the royal carriages, and his official residence at the King's stables in the Rue Saint-Thomas du Louvre; his salary paid the expenses of the winter, and the twenty-seven thousand francs paid those of the summer in Normandy.

Though this great man was still a bachelor, the fault was less his own than that of his aunt, who was not familiar with La Fontaine's fables. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's pretensions were stupendous, quite out of harmony with the spirit of the age; for great names without money can hardly meet with any wealthy heiresses among the high French nobility, which finds it difficult enough to enrich its sons, ruined by the equal division of property. To find an advantageous match for the young Duc d'Hérouville she should have cultivated the great financial houses, but this haughty daughter of the noble house offended them all by her cutting speeches. During the early years of the restoration, between 1817 and 1825, while looking out for millions, Mademoiselle d'Hérouville refused Mademoiselle Mongenod, the banker's daughter, with whom Monsieur de Fontaine was content. And now, after various good matches had been marred by her pride, she had just decided that the fortune of the Nucingens had been amassed by too vile means to allow of her lending herself to Madame de Nucingen's ambitious desire to see her daughter a duchess. The King, anxious to restore the splendor of the

Hérouvilles, had almost made the match himself, and he publicly taxed Mademoiselle d'Hérouville with folly. Thus the aunt made her nephew ridiculous, and the Duke laid himself open to ridicule.

It is a fact that when the great things of humanity vanish they leave some fragments (*frusteaux*, Rabelais would call them); and the French nobility in our day shows too many fag-ends. In this long study of manners neither the clergy nor the nobility have anything to complain of. Those two great and magnificent social necessaries are well represented; but would it not be false to the proud title of historian to be other than impartial, to fail to show here the degeneracy of the race—just as you will elsewhere find the study of an émigré, the Comte de Mortsauf (*le Lys dans la vallée*), and every noblest feature of the noble, in the Marquis d'Espard (*l'Interdiction*).

How was it that a race of brave and strong men, that the house of d'Hérouville, which gave the famous marshal to the royal cause, cardinals to the church, captains to the Valois, and brave men to Louis XIV., ended in a frail creature smaller than Butscha? It is a question we may ask ourselves in many a Paris drawing-room, as we hear one of the great names of France announced, and see a little slender slip of a man come in who seems only to breathe, or a prematurely old fellow, or some eccentric being, in whom the observer seeks, but scarcely finds, a feature in which imagination can see a trace of original greatness. The dissipations of the reign of Louis XV., the orgies of that selfish time, have produced the etiolated generation in which fine manners are the sole survivors of extinct great qualities. Style is the only inheritance preserved by the nobility. Thus, apart from certain exceptions, the defection which left Louis XVI. to perish may be to some extent explained by the miserable heritage of the reign of Madame de Pompadour.

The master of the horse, a young man with blue eyes,

fair, pale, and slight, had a certain dignity of mind; but his small size, and his aunt's mistake in having led him to be uselessly civil to the Vilquins, made him excessively shy. The d'Hérouvilles had had a narrow escape of dying out in the person of a cripple (*l'Enfant maudit*). But the Grand Marshal—as the family always called the d'Hérouville whom Louis XIII. had created Duke—had married at the age of eighty-two, and, of course, the family had been continued. The young Duke liked women; but he placed them too high, he respected them too much, he adored them, and was not at his ease but with those whom no one respects. This character had led to his living a twofold life. He avenged himself on women of easy life for the worship he paid in the drawing-rooms, or, if you like, the boudoirs, of Saint-Germain. His ways and his tiny figure, his weary face, his blue eyes, with their somewhat ecstatic expression, had added to the ridicule poured on him, most unjustly, for he was full of apprehensiveness and wit; but his wit had no sparkle, and was never seen excepting when he was quite at his ease. Fanny Beaupré, the actress, who was supposed to be his highly paid and most intimate friend, used to say of him, "It is good wine, but so tightly corked up that you break your corkscrews."

The handsome Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whom the master of the horse could only adore, crushed him by a speech which, unluckily, was repeated, as all clever but ill-natured speeches are.

"He reminds me," said she, "of a trinket, beautifully wrought, but which we show more than we use and always keep in cotton wool."

Even his title of master of the horse would, by force of contrast, make good King Charles X. laugh, though the Duc d'Hérouville was a capital horseman. Men, like books, are sometimes valued too late. Modeste had had a glimpse of the Duke during his fruitless visit to the Vilquins, and, as he went by, all these remarks involuntarily recurred to her mind;

but in the position in which she now stood, she perceived how valuable the Duc d'Hérouville's suit would be to save her from being at the mercy of a Canalis.

"I do not see," said she to Latournelle, "why the Duc d'Hérouville should not be allowed to call. In spite of our indigence," she added, with a mischievous glance at her father, "I am supposed to be an heiress. I shall have at last to publish a card of the field. Have you not noticed how Gobenheim's looks have changed in the course of this week? He is in despair because he cannot set down his faithful attendance for whist to the score of mute admiration of me!"

"Hush, my darling! here he is," said Madame Latournelle.

"Old Althor is in despair," said Gobenheim to Monsieur Mignon as he came in.

"What about?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"Vilquin is going to fail, they say, and on 'Change here you are said to have several millions——"

"No one knows," said Charles Mignon very drily, "what my obligations in India may amount to, and I do not care to admit the public to my confidence in business matters. Dumay," he said in his friend's ear, "if Vilquin is in difficulties we may be able to get the place back for what he gave for it in ready money."

Such was the state of affairs brought about by chance when, on Sunday morning, Canalis and la Brière, preceded by a courier, arrived at Madame Amaury's villa. They were told that the Duc d'Hérouville and his sister had arrived on the previous Tuesday at a hired house in Graville, for the benefit of their health. This competition led to a jest in the town that rents would rise at Ingouville.

"She will make the place a perfect hospital if this goes on!" remarked Mademoiselle Vilquin, disgusted at not becoming a duchess.

The perennial comedy of "The Heiress," now to be per-

formed at the chalet, might certainly, from the frame of mind in which it found Modeste, have been, as she had said in jest, a competition, for she was firmly resolved, after the overthrow of her illusions, to give her hand only to the man whose character should prove perfectly satisfactory.

On the morrow of their arrival, the rivals—still bosom friends—prepared to make their first visit to the chalet that evening. They devoted the whole of Sunday and all Monday morning to unpacking, to taking possession of Madame Amaury's house, and to settling themselves in it for a month. Beside, the poet, justified by his position as minister's apprentice in allowing himself some craft, had thought of everything; he wished to get the benefit of the excitement that might be caused by his arrival, of which some echoes might reach the chalet. Canalis, supposed to be much fatigued, did not go out; la Brière went twice to walk past the chalet, for he loved with a sort of desperation, he had the greatest dread of having repelled Modeste, his future seemed wrapped in thick clouds.

The two friends came down to dinner on that Monday in array for their first visit, the most important of all. La Brière was dressed as he had been in church on that famous Sunday; but he regarded himself as the satellite to a planet, and trusted wholly to the chance of circumstances. Canalis, on his part, had not forgotten his black coat, nor his orders, nor the drawing-room grace perfected by his intimacy with the Duchesse de Chaulieu, his patroness, and with the finest company of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Canalis had attended to every detail of dandyism, while poor Ernest was prepared to appear in the comparative carelessness of a hopeless man.

As he waited on the two gentlemen at table, Germain could not help smiling at the contrast. At the second course he came in with a diplomatic, or, to be exact, a disturbed air.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he to Canalis in a low voice, "did you know that monsieur the master of the horse is

coming to Graville to be cured of the same complaint as you and Monsieur de la Brière?"

"The little Duc d'Hérouville?" cried Canalis.

"Yes, sir."

"Can he have come for Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked la Brière, coloring.

"For Mademoiselle Mignon," replied Germain.

"We are done!" said Canalis, looking at la Brière.

"Ah!" Ernest eagerly replied, "that is the first time you have said *we* since we left Paris. Till this moment you have said *I*."

"You know me!" cried Melchior with a burst of laughter. "Well, we are not in a position to hold our own against an officer of the household, against the title of duke and peer, nor against the marsh-lands which the privy council has just conferred, on the strength of my report, on the House of Hérouville."

"His highness," said la Brière with mischievous gravity, "offers you a plum of consolation in the person of his sister."

Just at this moment the Comte de la Bastie was announced. The two young men arose to receive him, and la Brière hastened to meet him and introduce Canalis.

"I had to return the visit you paid me in Paris," said Charles Mignon to the young referendary, "and I knew that by coming here I should have the added pleasure of seeing one of our living great poets."

"Great?—monsieur," the poet replied with a smile; "there can be nothing great henceforth in an age to which the reign of Napoleon was the preface. To begin with, we are a perfect tribe of so-called great poets. And beside, second-rate talent apes genius so well that it has made any great distinction impossible."

"And is that what has driven you into politics?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"It is the same in that field too," said Canalis. "There

will be no more great statesmen; there will be only men who are more or less in touch with events. Under the system produced by the charter, monsieur, which regards the schedule of the rates you pay as a patent of nobility, there is nothing substantial but what you went to find in China—a fortune."

Melchior, well pleased with himself, and satisfied with the impression he was making on his future father-in-law, now turned to Germain.

"Give us coffee in the drawing-room," said he, bowing to the merchant to leave the dining-room.

"I must thank you, Monsieur le Comte," said la Brière, "for having spared me the embarrassment of not knowing how I might introduce my friend at your house. To your kind heart you add a happy wit——"

"Oh, such wit as is common to the natives of Provence," returned Mignon.

"Ah, you come from Provence?" cried Canalis.

"Forgive my friend," said la Brière, "he has not studied the history of the la Basties, as I have."

At the word friend, Canalis shot a deep look at Ernest.

"If your health permits," said the Provençal to the great poet, "I claim the honor of receiving you this evening under my roof. It will be a day to mark, as the ancients have it, *albo notanda lapillo.* Though we are somewhat shy of receiving so great a glory in so small a house, you will gratify my daughter's impatience, for her admiration has led her even to set your verses to music."

"You possess what is better than glory," said Canalis. "You have beauty in your home, if I may believe Ernest."

"Oh, she is a good girl, whom you will find quite provincial," said the father.

"Provincial as she is, she has a suitor in the Duc d'Hérouville," cried Canalis in a hard tone.

"Oh," said Monsieur Mignon, with the deceptive frankness of a southerner, "I leave my daughter free to choose. Dukes,

princes, private gentlemen, they are all the same to me, even men of genius. I will pledge myself to nothing; the man my Modeste may prefer will be my son-in-law, or rather my son," and he looked at la Brière. "Madame de la Bastie is a German; she cannot tolerate French etiquette, and I allow myself to be guided by my two women. I would always rather ride inside a carriage than on the box. We can discuss such serious matters in jest, for we have not yet seen the Duc d'Hérouville, and I do not believe in marriages arranged by proxy any more than in suitors forced on girls by their parents."

"That is a declaration equally disheartening and encouraging to two young men who seek in marriage the philosopher's stone of happiness," said Canalis.

"Do you not think it desirable, necessary, and indeed good policy to stipulate for perfect liberty for the parents, the daughter, and the suitors?" asked Charles Mignon.

Canalis, at a glance from la Brière, made no reply, and the conversation continued on indifferent subjects. After walking two or three times round the garden, the father withdrew, begging the two friends to pay their visit.

"That is our dismissal," cried Canalis. "You understood it as I did. After all, in his place I should not hesitate between the master of the horse and either of us, charming fellows as we may be."

"I do not think so," said la Brière, "I believe that the worthy officer came simply to gratify his own impatience to see you, and to declare his neutrality while opening his house to us. Modeste, bewitched by your fame and misled as to my identity, finds herself between poetry and hard fact. It is my misfortune to be the hard fact."

"Germain," said Canalis to the servant who came in to clear away the coffee, "order the carriage round. We will go out in half an hour and take a drive before going to the chalet."

The two young men were equally impatient to see Modeste, but la Brière dreaded the meeting, while Canalis looked forward to it with a confidence inspired by conceit. Ernest's impulsive advances to her father, and the flattery by which he had soothed the merchant's aristocratic pride while showing up the poet's awkwardness, made Canalis determine that he would play a part. He resolved that he would display all his powers of attraction, but at the same time affect indifference, seem to disdain Modeste, and so goad the girl's vanity. A disciple of the beautiful Duchesse de Chaulieu, he here showed himself worthy of his reputation as a man who knew women well; though he did not really know them, since no man does who is the happy victim of an exclusive passion. While the luckless Ernest, sunk in a corner of the carriage, was crushed by the terrors of true love and the anticipated wrath, scorn, contempt—all the lightnings of an offended and disappointed girl—and kept gloomy silence, Canalis, not less silent, was preparing himself like an actor studying an important part in a new play.

Neither of them certainly looked like a happy man.

For Canalis, indeed, the matter was serious. To him the mere fancy for marrying involved the breach of the serious friendship which had bound him for nearly ten years to the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Though he had screened his journey under the common excuse of overwork—in which no woman ever believes, even if it is true—his conscience troubled him somewhat; but to la Brière the word conscience seemed so jesuitical that he only shrugged his shoulders when the poet spoke of his scruples.

"Your conscience, my boy, seems to me to mean simply your fear of losing the gratifications of vanity, some solid advantages, and a pleasant habit in sacrificing Madame de Chaulieu's affection; for, if you are successful with Modeste, you will certainly have nothing to regret in the aftermath of a passion so constantly reaped during these eight years past.

If you tell me that you are afraid of offending your protectress, should she learn the real reason of your visit here, I can easily believe you. To throw over the Duchess and fail at the chalet is staking too much! And you mistake the distress of this alternative for remorse!"

"You know nothing about sentiment!" cried Canalis, nettled, as a man always is when he asks for a compliment and hears the truth.

"That is just what a bigamist would say to a dozen jurymen," said la Brière, laughing.

This epigram made a yet more disagreeable impression on Canalis; he thought la Brière much too clever and too free for a secretary.

The arrival of a handsome carriage, with a coachman in Canalis' livery, made all the greater sensation at the chalet because the two gentlemen were expected, and all the persons of this tale, excepting only the Duke and Butscha, were assembled there.

"Which is the poet?" asked Madame Latournelle of Dumay, as they stood in the window-bay, where she had posted herself, on hearing the carriage wheels, to inspect the visitors.

"The one who marches like a drum-major," replied the cashier.

"Ah, hah!" said the lady, studying Melchior, who strutted like a man on whom the world has its eye.

Though rather severe, Dumay's judgment—a simple soul, if ever man was—had hit the mark. Canalis was, morally speaking, a sort of Narcissus; this was the fault of the great lady who flattered him immensely, and spoilt him as women older than their adorers always will flatter and spoil men. A woman past her first youth, who means to attach a man permanently, begins by glorifying his faults, so as to make all rivalry impossible; for her rival cannot at once be in the secret of that subtle flattery to which a man so easily becomes

accustomed. Coxcombs are the product of this feminine industry when they are not coxcombs by nature.

Hence Canalis, caught young by the beautiful Duchess, justified himself for his airs and graces by telling himself that they pleased a woman whose taste was law. Subtle as these shades of feeling are, it is not impossible to render them. Thus Melchior had a real talent for reading aloud, which had been much admired, and too flattering praise had led him into an exaggerated manner, which neither poet nor actor can set bounds to, and which made de Marsay say—always de Marsay—that he did not declaim, but brayed out his verses, so fully would he mouth the vowels as he listened to himself. To use the slang of the stage, he pumped himself out, and made too long pauses. He would examine his audience with a knowing look, and give himself self-satisfied airs, with the aids to emphasis of "sawing the air" and "windmill action"—picturesque phrases, as the catchwords of art always are. Canalis indeed had imitators, and was the head of a school in this style. This melodramatic emphasis had slightly infected his conversation and given it a declamatory tone, as will have been seen in his interview with Dumay. When once the mind has become foppish, manners show the influence. Canalis had come at last to a sort of rhythmic gait, he invented attitudes, stole looks at himself in the glass, and made his language harmonize with the position he assumed. He thought so much of the effect to be produced, that more than once Blondet, a mocking spirit, had bet he would pull him up short—and had done it—merely by fixing a set gaze on the poet's hair, or boots, or the tail of his coat.

At the end of ten years these antics, which at first had passed under favor of youthful exuberance, had grown stale, and all the more so as Melchior himself seemed somewhat worn. Fashionable life is as fatiguing for men as for women, and perhaps the Duchess' twenty years' seniority weighed on Canalis more than on her; for the world saw her still handsome, with-

out a wrinkle, without rouge, and without heart. Alas! neither men nor women have a friend to warn them at the moment when the fragrance of modesty turns rancid, when a caressing look is like a theatrical trick, when the expressiveness of a face becomes a grimace, when the mechanism of their liveliness shows its rusty skeleton. Genius alone can renew its youth like the serpent, and in grace, as in all else, only the heart never grows stale. Persons of genuine feeling are single-hearted. Now in Canalis, as we know, the heart was dry. He wasted the beauty of his gaze by assuming at inappropriate moments the intensity that deep thought gives to the eyes.

And, then, praise to him was an article of exchange, in which he wanted to have all the advantage. His way of paying compliments, which charmed superficial persons, to those of more refined taste might seem insultingly commonplace, and the readiness of his flattery betrayed a set purpose. In fact, Melchior lied like a courtier. To the Duc de Chaulieu, who had proved an ineffective speaker when, as minister for foreign affairs, he had been obliged to mount the tribune, Canalis had unblushingly said, "Your excellency was sublime!"

Many men like Canalis might have had their affectations eradicated by failure administered in small doses. Trifling, indeed, as such faults are in the gilded drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—where every one contributes a quota of absurdities, and this kind of audacity, artificiality, inflation if you will, has a background of excessive luxury and magnificent dress which is perhaps an excuse for it—they are monstrously conspicuous in the depths of the country, where what is thought ridiculous is the very opposite of all this. Canalis, indeed, at once pompous and mannered, could not now metamorphose himself; he had had time to set in the mould into which the Duchess had cast him, and he was, moreover, very Parisian, or, if you prefer it, very French. The Parisian is amazed that everything, everywhere, is not

what it is in Paris, and the Frenchman that it is not what it is in France. Good taste consists in accommodating one's self to the manners of other places without losing too much of one's native character, as Alcibiades did—the model of a gentleman. True grace is elastic. It yields to every circumstance, it is in harmony with every social atmosphere, it knows how to walk in the street in a cheap dress, remarkable only for its fitness, instead of parading the feathers and gaudy hues which some vulgar people flaunt.

Now, Canalis, influenced by a woman who loved him for her own sake rather than for his, wanted to be himself a law, and to remain what he was wherever he might go. He believed that he carried his private public with him—a mistake shared by some other great men in Paris.

While the poet made a studied entrance into the little drawing-room, la Brière sneaked in like a dog that is afraid of being beaten.

"Ah, here is my soldier!" said Canalis, on seeing Dumay, after paying Madame Mignon his respects, and bowing to the other women. "Your anxieties are relieved, I hope?" he went on, offering him his hand with a flourish. "But the sight of mademoiselle sufficiently explains their gravity. I spoke only of earthly beings, not of angels."

The hearers by their expression asked for a clue to this riddle.

"Yes, I shall regard it as a triumph," the poet went on, understanding that everybody wanted an explanation, "that I succeeded in alarming one of those men of iron whom Napoleon succeeded in finding to form the piles on which he tried to found an empire too vast to be permanent. Only time can serve to cement such a structure! But have I any right to boast of my triumph? I had nothing to do with it; it was the triumph of fancy over fact. Your battles, dear Monsieur Dumay; your heroic cavalry charges, Monsieur le Comte; in short, war was the form assumed by Napoleon's

thoughts. And of all these things what remains? The grass that grows over them knows nothing of them, nor will harvests mark the spot; but for history, but for writing, the future might know nothing of this heroic age! Thus your fifteen years of struggle are no more than ideas, and that is what will save the Empire; poets will make a poem of it. A land that can win such battles ought to be able to sing them!"

Canalis paused to collect, by a sweeping glance at their faces, the tribute of admiration due to him from these country folk.

"You cannot doubt, monsieur," said Madame Mignon, "how much I regret being unable to see you, from the way you indemnify me by the pleasure I feel in listening to you."

Modeste, dressed as she had been on the day when this story opens, having made up her mind to think Canalis sublime, sat speechless, and dropped her embroidery, which hung from her fingers at the end of the needleful of cotton.

"Modeste, this is Monsieur de la Brière. Monsieur Ernest —my daughter," said Charles Mignon, thinking that the secretary was thrown rather too much into the background.

The young lady bowed coldly to Ernest, giving him a look intended to convey to the whole party that she had never seen him before.

"I beg your pardon," said she, without a blush, "the fervent admiration I profess for our greatest poet is, in my friends' eyes, a sufficient excuse for my having seen no one else."

The clear, young voice, with a ring in it like the famous tones of Mademoiselle Mars, enchanted the poor referendary, already dazzled by Modeste's beauty, and in his amazement he spoke a few words which, had they been true, would have been sublime——

"But he is my friend," said he.

"Then you will have forgiven me," she replied.

"He is more than a friend," cried Canalis, taking Ernest by the shoulder, and leaning on him as Alexander leaned on Hephaestion. "We love each other like two brothers——"

Madame Latournelle cut the poet short in the middle of his speech by saying to her husband—

"Surely monsieur is the gentleman we saw in church?"

"Why not?" said Charles Mignon, seeing Ernest color.

Modeste gave no sign, but took up her work again.

"You may be right; I have been twice to le Havre," said la Brière, sitting down by the side of Dumay after again saluting him.

Canalis, bewildered by Modeste's beauty, misunderstood the admiration she expressed, and flattered himself that his efforts had been perfectly successful.

"I should think a man of genius devoid of heart if he had not about him some attached friend," said Modeste, to revive the subject interrupted by Madame Latournelle's awkwardness.

"Mademoiselle, Ernest's devotion is enough to make me believe that I am good for something," said Canalis. "For my dear Pylades is full of talent; he was quite half of the greatest minister we have had since the peace. Though he fills a distinguished position, he consents to be my tutor in politics. He teaches me business, he feeds me with his experience, while he might aspire to the highest office. Oh! he is much superior to me——"

At a gesture from Modeste, Melchior added gracefully—

"The poetry I write he bears in his heart; and if I dare speak so to his face, it is because he is as diffident as a nun."

"Come, come, that will do," said la Brière, who did not know how to look. "My dear fellow, you might be a mother wanting to get her daughter married."

"How can you think, monsieur, of becoming a politician?" said Charles Mignon to Canalis.

"For a poet it is abdication!" said Modeste. "Politics are the stand-by of men without imagination," she added as an after-thought.

"Nay, mademoiselle, in these days the tribune is the grandest stage in the world; it has taken the place of the lists of chivalry; it will be the meeting-place of every kind of intellect, as of old the army was of every form of courage."

Canalis had mounted his war-horse; for ten minutes he declaimed on the subject of political life: Poetry was the preface to a statesman. In these days the orator's province was lofty generalization; he was the pastor of ideas. If a poet could show his countrymen the road of the future, did he cease to be himself? He quoted Chateaubriand, asserting that he would some day be more important on his political than on his literary side. The French Chambers would be the guiding light of humanity. Contests by words henceforth had taken the place of fighting on the battlefield. Such or such a sitting had been a second Austerlitz and the speakers had risen to the dignity of generals; they spent as much of their life, courage, and strength, they wore themselves out as much as generals in war. Was not speech almost the most exhausting expenditure of vital power that man could indulge in, etc., etc.

This long harangue, made up of modern commonplace, but clothed in high-sounding phrases, newly coined words, and intended to prove that the Baron de Canalis must some day be one of the glories of the tribune, made a deep impression on the notary, on Gobenheim, on Madame Latournelle, and Madame Mignon. Modeste felt as if she were at the play and fired with enthusiasm for the actor, exactly as Ernest was in her presence; for though the secretary knew all these fine phrases by heart, he was listening to them by the light of the girl's eyes, and falling in love to the verge of madness. To this genuine lover Modeste had eclipsed all the different Mod-

estes he had pictured to himself when reading or answering her letters.

This visit, of which Canalis had fixed the limits beforehand, for he would not give his admirers time to get tired of him, ended by an invitation to dinner on the following Monday.

"We shall no longer be at the chalet," said the Comte de la Bastie. "It is Dumay's home once more. I am going back to my old house by an agreement for six months, with the right of redemption, which I have just signed with Monsieur Vilquin in my friend Latournelle's office."

"I only hope," said Dumay, "that Vilquin may not be in a position to repay the sum you have loaned him on it."

"You will be in a home suitable to your fortune," said Canalis.

"To the fortune I am supposed to have," Charles Mignon put in.

"It would be a pity," said the poet, with a charming bow to Modeste, "that this Madonna should lack a frame worthy of her divine affections."

This was all that Canalis said about Modeste, for he had affected not to look at her, and to behave like a man who is not at liberty to think of marriage.

"Oh, my dear Madame Mignon, he is immensely clever!" exclaimed the notary's wife, when the gravel was heard crunching under the Parisians' feet.

"Is he rich? that is the question," said Gobenheim.

Modeste stood at the window, not missing a single gesture of the great poet's, and never casting a glance on Ernest de la Brière. When Monsieur Mignon came into the room again, and Modeste, after receiving a parting bow from the two young men as the carriage turned, had resumed her seat, a deep discussion ensued, such as country people indulge in on Paris visitors after a first meeting. Gobenheim reiterated

his remark, is he rich?" in reply to the trio of praise sung by Madame Latournelle, Modeste, and her mother.

"Rich?" retorted Modeste. "What can it matter? Can you not see that Monsieur de Canalis is a man destined to fill the highest posts in the government? He has more than wealth; he has the means of acquiring wealth!"

"He will be an ambassador or a minister," said Monsieur Mignon.

"The taxpayers may have to pay for his funeral nevertheless," said little Lautournelle.

"Why?" asked Charles Mignon.

"He strikes me as being a man to squander all the fortunes which Mademoiselle Modeste so liberally credits him with the power of earning."

"How can Modeste help being liberal to a man who regards her as a Madonna?" said Dumay, faithful to the aversion Canalis had roused in him.

Gobenheim was preparing the whist-table, with all the more eagerness because since Monsieur Mignon's return Latournelle and Dumay had allowed themselves to play for ten sous a point.

"Now, my little darling," said the father to his daughter in the window recess, "you must own that papa thinks of everything. In a week, if you send orders this evening to the dressmaker you used to employ in Paris and to your other tradesmen, you may display yourself in all the magnificence of an heiress, while I take time to settle into our old house. You shall have a nice pony, so take care to have a habit made—the master of the horse deserves that little attention."

"All the more so as we must show our friends the country," said Modeste, whose cheeks were recovering the hues of health.

"The secretary," observed Madame Mignon, "is not much to speak of."

"He is a little simpleton," said Madame Latournelle. "The poet was very attentive to everybody. He remembered to thank Latournelle for finding him a house, by saying to me that he seemed to have consulted a lady's taste. And the other stood there as gloomy as a Spaniard, staring hard, looking as if he could swallow Modeste. If he had looked at me so, I should have been frightened."

"He has a very pleasant voice," Madame Mignon observed.

"He must have come to le Havre to make inquiries about the house of Mignon for the poet's benefit," said Modeste, with a sly look at her father. "He is certainly the man we saw in church."

Madame Dumay and the Latournelles accepted this explanation of Ernest's former journey.

"I tell you what, Ernest," said Canalis when they had gone twenty yards, "I see no one in the Paris world, not a single girl to marry, that can compare with this adorable creature!"

"Oh! it is all settled," replied la Brière, with concentrated bitterness; "she loves you—or, if you choose, she will love you. Your fame half-won the battle. In short, you have only to command. You can go there alone next time; Modeste has the deepest contempt for me, and she is right; but I do not see why I should condemn myself to the torture of going to admire, desire, and adore what I can never possess."

After a few condoling speeches, in which Canalis betrayed his satisfaction at having produced a new edition of Cæsar's famous motto, he hinted at his wish to be "off" with the Duchesse de Chaulieu. La Brière, who could not endure the conversation, made an excuse of the loveliness of a rather doubtful night to get out and walk; he flew like a madman to the cliffs, where he stayed till half-past ten, given up to a sort of frenzy, sometimes walking at a great pace and spouting soliloquies, sometimes standing still or sitting down, with-

out observing the uneasiness he was giving to two coastguards on the lookout. After falling in love with Modeste's mental culture and aggressive candor, he now added his adoration of her beauty, that is to say, an unreasoning and inexplicable passion, to all the other causes that had brought him ten days ago to church at le Havre.

Then he wandered back to the chalet, where the Pyrenean dogs barked at him so furiously that he could not allow himself the happiness of gazing at Modeste's windows. In love, all these things are of no more account than the under-painting covered by the final touches is to the painter; but they are nevertheless the whole of love, as concealed painstaking is the whole of art: the outcome is a great painter and a perfect lover, which the public and the woman worship at last—often too late.

"Well!" cried he aloud, "I will stay, I will endure. I shall see her and love her selfishly, for my own joy! Modeste will be my sun, my life, I shall breathe by her breath, I shall rejoice in her joys, I shall pine over her sorrows, even if she should be the wife of that egoist Canalis——"

"That is something like love, monsieur!" said a voice proceeding from a bush by the wayside. "Bless me! is everybody in love with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?"

Butscha started forth and gazed at la Brière. Ernest sheathed his wrath as he looked at the dwarf in the moonlight, and walked on a few steps without replying.

"Two soldiers serving in the same company should be on better terms than that," said Butscha. "If you are not in love with Canalis, I am not very sweet on him myself."

"He is my friend," said Ernest, earnestly scrutinizing the speaker.

"Oh! then you are the little secretary?" replied the hunchback.

"I would have you to know, monsieur," said la Brière, "that I am no man's secretary. I have the honor to call my-

self councilor to one of the high courts of justice of this realm."

"I have the honor, then, of making my bow to Monsieur de la Brière," said Butscha. "I have the honor to call myself head clerk to Maître Latournelle, the first notary in le Havre, and I certainly am better off than you are. Yes—for I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle Modeste de la Bastie almost every afternoon for the last four years, and I propose to live within her ken as one of the King's household lives at the Tuileries. If I were offered the throne of Russia, I should reply, 'I like the sun too well!' Is not that as much as to say, monsieur, that I care more for her than for myself—with all respect and honor? And do you suppose that the high and mighty Duchesse de Chaulieu will look with a friendly eye on the happiness of Madame de Canalis, when her maid, who is in love with Monsieur Germain, and is already uneasy at that fascinating valet's long absence at le Havre, as she dresses her mistress' hair complains?"

"How do you know all this?" said la Brière, interrupting him.

"In the first place, I am a notary's clerk," replied Butscha. "And have you not observed that I have a hump? It is full of ingenuity, monsieur. I made myself cousin to Mademoiselle Philoxène Jacmin, of Honfleur, where my mother was born, also a Jacmin—there are eleven branches of Jacmins at Honfleur. And so my fair cousin, tempted by the hope of a highly improbable legacy, told me a good many things."

"And the Duchess is vindictive?" said la Brière.

"As vengeful as a queen, says Philoxène. She has not yet forgiven the Duke for being only her husband," replied Butscha. "She hates as she loves. I am thoroughly informed as to her temper, her dress, her tastes, her religion, and her meanness, for Philoxène stripped her soul and

body. I went to the opera to see Madame de Chaulieu, and I do not regret my ten francs—I am not thinking of the piece. If my hypothetical cousin had not told me that her mistress had seen fifty springs, I should have thought it lavish to give her thirty; she has known no winter, my lady the Duchess."

"True," said la Brière, "she is a cameo preserved by the onyx. Canalis would be in great difficulties if the Duchess knew of his plans; and I hope, monsieur, that you will go no further in an espionage so unworthy of an honest man."

"Monsieur," said Butscha proudly, "to me Modeste is the State. I do not spy, I forestall! The Duchesse de Chaulieu will come here if necessary, or will remain quietly where she is if I think it advisable."

"You?"

"I."

"And by what means?" asked la Brière.

"Ah, that is the question," said the little hunchback. He plucked a blade of grass. "This little plant imagines that man builds palaces for its accommodation, and one day it dislodges the most firmly cemented marble, just as the populace, having found a foothold in the structure of the feudal system, overthrew it. The power of the weakest that can creep in everywhere is greater than that of the strong man who relies on his cannon. There are three of us, a Swiss league, who have sworn that Modeste shall be happy, and who would sell our honor for her sake. Good-night, monsieur. If you love Mademoiselle de la Bastie, forget this conversation, and give me your hand to shake, for you seem to me to have a heart! I was pining to see the chalet; I got here just as she put out her candle. I saw you when the dogs gave tongue, I heard you raving; and so I took the liberty of telling you that we serve under the same colors, in the regiment of loyal devotion!"

"Good," replied la Brière, pressing the hunchback's hand. "Then be kind enough to tell me whether Mademoiselle

Modeste ever fell in love with a man before her secret correspondence with Canalis?"

"Oh!" cried Butscha, "the mere question is an insult! And even now who knows whether she is in love? Does she herself know? She has rushed into enthusiasm for the mind, the genius, the spirit of this verse-monger, this vendor of literary pinchbeck; but she will study him—we shall all study him; I will find some means of making his true character peep out from beneath the carapace of the well-mannered man, and we shall see the insignificant head of his ambition and his vanity," said Butscha, rubbing his hands. "Now, unless mademoiselle is mad enough to die of it——"

"Oh, she sat entranced before him, as if he were a miracle!" cried la Brière, revealing the secret of his jealousy.

"If he is really a good fellow, and loyal, and loves her, if he is worthy of her," Butscha went on, "if he gives up his Duchess, it is the Duchess I will spread a net for! There, my dear sir, follow that path, and you will be at home in ten minutes."

But Butscha presently turned back and called to the hapless Ernest, who, as an ardent lover, would have stayed all night to talk of Modeste.

"Monsieur," said Butscha, "I have not yet had the honor of seeing our great poet; I am anxious to study that splendid phenomenon in the exercise of his functions; do me the kindness to come and spend the evening at the chalet the day after to-morrow; and stay some time, for a man does not completely betray himself in an hour. I shall know, before any one, if he loves, or ever will love, or ever could love Mademoiselle Modeste."

"You are very young to——"

"To be a professor!" interrupted Butscha. "Ah, monsieur, the deformed come into the world a hundred years old. Besides, a sick man, you see, when he has been ill a long time, becomes more knowing than his doctor; he understands

the ways of the disease, which is more than a conscientious doctor always does. Well, in the same way, a man who loves a woman, while the woman cannot help scorning him for his ugliness or his misshapen person, is at last so qualified in love that he could pass as a seducer, as the sick man at last recovers his health. Folly alone is incurable. Since the age of six, and I am now five-and-twenty, I have had neither father nor mother; public charity has been my mother and the King's commissioner my father. Nay, do not be distressed," he said, in reply to Ernest's expression, "I am less miserable than my position—— Well, since I was six years old, when the insolent eyes of a servant of Madame Latournelle's told me that I had no right to wish to love, I have loved and have studied women. I began with ugly ones—it is well to take the bull by the horns. So I took for the first subject of my studies Madame Latournelle herself, who has been really angelic to me. I was perhaps wrong; however, so it was. I distilled her in my alembic, and I at last discovered hidden in a corner of her soul this idea, 'I am not as ugly as people think!' And in spite of her deep piety, by working on that idea, I could have led her to the brink of the abyss—to leave her there."

"And have you studied Modeste?"

"I thought I had told you," replied the hunchback, "that my life is hers, as France is the King's! Now do you understand my playing the spy in Paris? I alone know all the nobleness and pride, the unselfishness, and unexpected sweetness that lie in the heart and soul of that adorable creature—the indefatigable kindness, the true piety, the light-heartedness, information, refinement, affability——"

Butscha drew out his handkerchief to stop two tears from falling, and la Brière held his hand for some time.

"I shall live in her radiance! It comes from her, and it ends in me, that is how we are united, somewhat as nature is to God by light and the word. Good-night, monsieur, I

never chattered so much in my life; but seeing you below her windows, I guessed that you loved her in my way."

Butscha, without waiting for an answer, left the unhappy lover, on whose heart this conversation had shed a mysterious balm. Ernest determined to make Butscha his friend, never suspecting that the clerk's loquacity was chiefly intended to open communication with Canalis' house. In what a flow and ebb of thoughts, resolutions, and schemes was Ernest lapped before falling asleep; and his friend Canalis was sleeping the sleep of the triumphant, the sweetest slumber there is next to that of the just.

At breakfast the friends agreed to go together to spend the evening of the following day at the chalet, and be initiated into the mild joys of provincial whist. To get rid of this day they ordered out the horses, both guaranteed to ride and drive, and ventured forth into a country certainly as unknown to them as China; for the least known thing in France to a Frenchman, is France.

As he reflected on his position as a lover rejected and scorned, the secretary made such a study of himself as he had been led to make by the question Modeste had put to him at the beginning of their correspondence. Though misfortune is supposed to develop virtues, it only does so in virtuous people; for this sort of cleaning up of the conscience takes place only in naturally cleanly persons. La Brière determined to swallow his griefs with Spartan philosophy, to preserve his dignity, and never allow himself to be betrayed into a mean action; while Canalis, fascinated by such an enormous fortune, vowed to himself that he would neglect nothing that might captivate Modeste. Egoism and unselfishness, the watchwords of these two natures, brought them by a moral law, which sometimes has whimsical results, to behave in opposition to their characters. The selfish man meant to act self-sacrifice, the man who was all kindliness would take refuge on the Aventine Hill of pride. This phenomenon may also be seen in poli-

tics. Men often turn their natures inside out, and not unfrequently the public does not know the right side from the wrong.

After dinner they heard from Germain that the master of the horse had arrived; he was introduced at the chalet that evening by Monsieur Latournelle. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville managed to offend the worthy lawyer at once, by sending a message through a footman, desiring him to call at her house, instead of simply sending her nephew to take up the lawyer, who would certainly have talked till his dying day of the visit paid by the master of the horse. So when his lordship offered to take him to Ingouville in his carriage the little notary merely said that he must return home to accompany his wife. Seeing by his sullen manner that there was something wrong, the Duke graciously replied, "If you will allow me, I shall have the honor of going round to fetch Madame Latournelle."

In spite of an emphatic shrug of his despotic aunt's shoulders, the Duke set out with the little notary. Intoxicated with the delight of seeing a magnificent carriage at her door, and men in the royal livery to let down the steps, the lawyer's wife did not know which way to turn for her gloves, her parasol, her bag, and her dignity, when it was announced to her that the master of the horse had come to fetch her. As soon as she was in the carriage, while pouring out civilities to the little Duke, she suddenly exclaimed with kindly impulse—

"Oh, and Butscha?"

"Bring Butscha, too," said the Duke, smiling.

As the harbor-men, who had collected around the dazzling vehicle, saw these three little men with that tall meagre woman, they looked at each other and laughed.

"If you stuck them together end-to-end, perhaps you might make a man tall enough for that long May-pole," said a sailor from Bordeaux.

"Have you anything else to take with you, madame?" the

Duke asked jestingly, as the footman stood waiting for his orders.

"No, monseigneur," replied she, turning scarlet, and looking at her husband as much as to say, "What have I done wrong?"

"His lordship," said Butscha, "does me too much honor in speaking of me as a thing; a poor clerk like me is a nameless object."

Though he spoke lightly, the Duke colored and made no reply. Grand folk are always in the wrong to bandy jests with those below them. Banter is a game, and a game implies equality. And, indeed, it is to obviate the unpleasant results of such a transient familiarity that, when the game is over, the players have a right to not recognize each other.

The Duke's visit to le Havre was ostensibly for the settlement of an immense undertaking, namely, the reclaiming of a vast tract of land, left dry by the sea between two streams, of which the ownership had just been confirmed to the Hérouville family by the high court of appeals. The proposed scheme was no less a matter than the adjustment of sluice gates to two bridges, to drain a tract of mud-flats extending for about a kilometre, with a breadth of three or four hundred acres, to embank roads and dig ditches. When the Duc d'Hérouville had explained the nature and position of the land, Charles Mignon observed that he would have to wait until nature had enabled the soil to settle by the consolidation of its still shifting natural constituents.

"Time, which has providentially enriched your estate, Monsieur le Duc, must be left to complete its work," said he, in conclusion. "You will do well to wait another fifty years before setting to work."

"Do not let that be your final opinion, Monsieur le Comte," said the Duke. "Come to Hérouville, see, and judge for yourself."

Charles Mignon replied that some capitalist would need to

look into the matter with a cool head ; and this remark had given Monsieur d'Hérouville an excuse for calling at the chalet.

Modeste made a deep impression on him ; he begged the favor of a visit from her, saying that his aunt and sister had heard of her, and would be happy to make her acquaintance. On this, Charles Mignon proposed to introduce his daughter to the two ladies, and invited them to dine with him on the day when he should be re-established in his former home ; this the Duke accepted. The nobleman's blue ribbon, his title, and, above all, his rapturous glances, had their effect on Modeste ; still, she was admirably calm in speech, manner, and dignity. The Duke when he left seemed loath to depart, but he had received an invitation to go to the chalet every evening, on the pretext that, of course, no courtier of Charles X. could possibly endure an evening without a game of whist.

So, on the following evening, Modeste was to see her three admirers all on the stage at once.

Say what she will, it is certainly flattering to a girl to see several rivals fluttering around her, men of talent, fame, or high birth, all trying to shine and please her, though the logic of the heart will lead her to sacrifice everything to personal predilection. Even if Modeste should lose credit by the admission, she owned, at a later day, that the feelings expressed in her letters had paled before the pleasure of seeing three men, so different, vying with each other—three men, each of whom would have done honor to the most exacting family pride. At the same time, this luxury of vanity gave way before the misanthropical spirit of mischief engendered by the bitter affront which she already thought of merely as a disappointment. So when her father said to her with a smile—

"Well, Modeste, would you like to be a duchess ?"

"Ill fortune has made me philosophical," she replied, with a mocking curtsey.

"You are content to be baroness?" asked Butscha quietly.

"Or viscountess?" replied her father.

"How could that be?" said Modeste quickly.

"Why, if you were to accept Monsieur de la Brière, he would certainly have influence enough with the King to get leave to take my title and bear my arms."

"Oh, if it is a matter of borrowing a disguise, he will make no difficulties!" replied Modeste bitterly.

Butscha did not understand this sarcasm, of which only Monsieur and Madame Mignon and Dumay knew the meaning.

"As soon as marriage is in question, every man assumes a disguise," said Madame Latournelle, "and women set them the example. Ever since I can remember I have heard it said, 'Monsieur this or mademoiselle that is making a very good match'—so the other party must be making a bad one, I suppose?"

"Marriage," quoth Butscha, "is like an action at law; one side is always left dissatisfied; and if one party deceives the other, half the married couples one sees certainly play the farce at the cost of the other."

"Whence you conclude, Sire Butscha?" asked Modeste.

"That we must always keep our eyes sternly open to the enemy's movements," replied the clerk.

"What did I tell you, my pet?" said Charles Mignon, alluding to his conversation with his daughter on the sea-shore.

"Men, to get married," interjected Latournelle, "play as many parts as mothers make their daughters play in order to get them off their hands."

"Then you think stratagem allowable?" rejoined Modeste.

"On both sides," cried Gobenheim. "Then the game is even."

This conversation was carried on in a fragmentary manner between the deals, and mixed up with the opinions each one

allowed himself to express about Monsieur d'Hérouville, who was thought quite good-looking by the little notary, by little Dumay, and by little Butscha.

"I see," said Madame Mignon, with a smile, "that Madame Latournelle and my husband are quite monsters here!"

"Happily for him the colonel is not excessively tall," replied Butscha, while the lawyer was dealing, "for a tall man who is also intelligent is always a rare exception."

But for this little discussion on the legitimate use of matrimonial wiles, the account of the evening so anxiously expected by Butscha might seem lengthy; but wealth, for which so much secret meanness was committed, may perhaps lend to the minutiæ of private life the interest which is always aroused by the social feeling so frankly set forth by Ernest in his reply to Modeste.

In the course of the next morning Desplein arrived. He stayed only so long as was needful for sending to le Havre for a relay of post-horses, which were at once put in—about an hour. After examining Madame Mignon, he said she would certainly recover her sight, and fixed the date for the operation a month later. This important consultation was held, of course, in the presence of the family party at the chalet, all anxiously eager to hear the decision of the prince of science. The illustrious member of the Academy of Science asked the blind woman ten short questions, while examining her eyes in the bright light by the window. Modeste, amazed at the value of time to this famous man, noticed that his traveling chaise was full of books, which he intended to read on his way back to Paris, for he had come away on the previous evening, spending the night in sleeping and traveling.

The swiftness and clearness of Desplein's decisions on every answer of Madame Mignon's, his curt speech, his manner, all gave Modeste, for the first time, any clear idea of a

man of genius. She felt the enormous gulf between Canalis, a man of second-rate talents, and Desplein, a more than superior mind.

A man of genius has in the consciousness of his talent and the assurance of his fame a domain, as it were, where his legitimate pride can move and breathe freely without incommoding other people. Then the incessant conflict with men and things gives him no time to indulge the coquettish conceits in which the heroes of fashion indulge, as they hastily reap the harvest of a passing season, while their vanity and self-love are exacting and irritable, like a sort of custom-house ever alert to seize a toll on everything that passes within its ken.

Modeste was all the more delighted with the great surgeon because he seemed struck by her extreme beauty—he, under whose hands so many women had passed, and who for years had been scrutinizing them with the lancet and microscope.

"It would really be too bad," said he, with the gallantry which he could so well assume, in contrast to his habitual abruptness, "that a mother should be deprived of seeing such a lovely daughter."

Modeste herself waited on the great surgeon at the simple luncheon he would accept. She, with her father and Dumay, escorted the learned man, for whom so many sick were longing, as far as the chaise which waited for him at the side gate, and there, her eyes beaming with hope, she said once more to Desplein—

"Then dear mamma will really see me?"

"Yes, my pretty will-o'-the-wisp, I promise you she shall," he replied, with a smile; "and I am incapable of deceiving you, for I, too, have a daughter."

The horses whirled him off as he spoke the words, which had an unexpected touch of feeling. Nothing is more bewitching than the unforeseen peculiar to very clever men.

This visit was the event of the day, and it left a track of

light in Modeste's soul. The enthusiastic child admired without guile this man whose life was at everybody's command, and in whom the habit of contemplating physical suffering had overcome every appearance of egoism.

In the evening, when Gobenheim, the Latournelles, Canalis, Ernest, and the Duc d'Hérouville had assembled, they congratulated the Mignon family on the good news given them by Desplein. Then, of course, the conversation, led by Modeste, as we know her from her letters, turned on this man whose genius, unfortunately for his glory, could only be appreciated by the most learned men and the medical faculty. And Gobenheim uttered this speech, which is in our days the sanctifying anointing of genius in the ears of economists and bankers—

"He makes enormous sums."

"He is said to be very greedy?" replied Canalis.

The praise lavished on Desplein by Modeste annoyed the poet. Vanity behaves like woman. They both believe that they lose something by praise or affection bestowed on another. Voltaire was jealous of the wit of a man whom Paris admired for two days, just as a duchess takes offense at a glance bestowed on her waiting-maid. So great is the avarice of these two feelings that they feel robbed of a pittance bestowed on the poor.

"And do you think, monsieur," asked Modeste, with a smile, "that a genius should be measured by the ordinary standard?"

"It would first be necessary, perhaps," said Canalis, "to define a man of genius. One of his prime characteristics is inventiveness—the invention of a type, of a system, of a power. Napoleon was an inventor, apart from his other characteristics of genius. He invented his method of warfare. Walter Scott is an inventor, Linnæus was an inventor, so are Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier. Such men are geniuses above all else. They renew, or expand, or modify

science or art. But Desplein is a man whose immense talent consists in applying laws that were previously discovered ; in detecting, by natural intuition, the final tendency of every temperament, and the hour marked out by nature for the performance of an operation. He did not, like Hippocrates, lay the foundations of the science itself. He has not discovered a system, like Galen, Broussais, or Rasori. His is the genius of the executant, like Moscheles on the piano, Paganini on the violin, or Farinelli on his own larynx—men who display immense powers, but who do not create music. Between Beethoven and Madame Catalani you will allow that to him should be awarded the crown of genius and suffering ; to her a vast heap of five-franc pieces. We can pay our debt to one, while the world must for ever remain in debt to the other! We owe more and more to Molière every day, and we have already everpaid Baron."

"It seems to me that you are giving too large a share to ideas, my dear fellow," said la Brière, in a sweet and gentle voice that was in startling contrast to the poet's peremptory style, for his flexible voice had lost its insinuating tone and assumed the dominant ring of rhetoric. "Genius ought to be estimated chiefly for its utility. Parmentier, Jacquard, and Papin, to whom statues will one day be erected, were also men of genius. They have in a certain direction altered, or will alter, the face of nations. From this point of view Desplein will always appear in the eyes of thinking men accompanied by a whole generation whose tears and sufferings have been alleviated by his mighty hand."

That Ernest should have expressed this opinion was enough to prompt Modeste to contest it.

"In that case, monsieur," said she, "the man who should find means to reap corn without spoiling the straw, by a machine that should do the work of ten laborers, would be a man of genius?"

"Oh yes, my child," said Madame Mignon, "he would be

blessed by the poor, whose bread would then be cheaper; and he whom the poor bless is blessed by God."

"That is to give utility the preference over art," said Modeste, with a toss of her head.

"But for utility," said her father, "on what would art be founded? On what basis would it rest, on what would the poet live, and who would give him shelter, who would pay him?"

"Oh, my dear father, that is quite the view of a merchant captain, a Philistine, a counter-jumper. That Gobenheim or Monsieur de la Brière should hold it I can understand; they are interested in the solution of such social problems; but you, whose life has been so romantically useless to your age, since your blood spilt on the soil of Europe, and the terrible sufferings required of you by a Colossus, have not hindered France from losing ten departments which the Republic had conquered, how can you subscribe to a view so excessively 'out of date,' as the romantics have it? It is easy to see that you have dropped from China."

The disrespect of Modeste's speech was aggravated by the scornful and contemptuous flippancy of the tone in which she intentionally spoke, and which astonished Madame Latournelle, Madame Mignon, and Dumay. Madame Latournelle, though she opened her eyes wide enough, could not see nor in the least comprehend what Modeste was driving at; Butscha, who was as alert as a spy, looked significantly at Monsieur Mignon on seeing his face flush with deep and sudden indignation.

"A little more, mademoiselle, and you would have failed in respect to your father," said the colonel with a smile, enlightened by Butscha's glance. "That is what comes of spoiling a child."

"I am an only daughter!" she retorted insolently.

"Unique!" said the notary, with emphasis.

"Monsieur," said Modeste to Latournelle, "my father is

very willing that I should educate him. He gave me life, I give him wisdom—he will still be my debtor."

"But there is a way of doing it—and, above all, a time for it," interposed Madame Mignon.

"But mademoiselle is very right," said Canalis, rising, and placing himself by the ornate mantel in one of the finest postures of his collection of attitudes. "God in His foresight has given man food and clothing, and has not directly endowed him with art! He has said to man, 'To eat, you must stoop to the earth; to think, you must uplift yourself to Me!' We need the life of the soul as much as the life of the body. Hence there are two forms of utility—obviously we do not wear books on our feet. From the utilitarian point of view, a canto of an epic is not to compare with a bowl of cheap soup from a charity kitchen. The finest idea in the world cannot take the place of the sail of a ship. An automatic boiler, no doubt, by lifting itself two inches, supplies us with calico thirty sous a yard cheaper; but this machine and the inventions of industry do not breathe the life of the people, and will never tell the future that it has existed; whereas Egyptian art, Mexican art, Greek or Roman art, with their masterpieces, stigmatized as useless, have borne witness to the existence of these nations through a vast space of time in places where great intermediate nations have vanished without leaving even a name-card, for lack of men of genius! Works of genius form the *summum* of a civilization and presuppose a great use. You, no doubt, would not think a pair of boots better in itself than a drama, nor prefer a windmill to the church of Saint-Ouen? Well, a nation is moved by the same spirit as an individual, and man's favorite dream is to survive himself morally, as he reproduces himself physically. What survives of a nation is the work of its men of genius.

"At this moment France is a vigorous proof of the truth of this proposition. She is assuredly outdone by England in industry, commerce, and navigation; nevertheless, she leads

the world, I believe, by her artists, her gifted men, and the taste of her products. There is not an artist, not a man of mark anywhere, who does not come to Paris to win his patent of mastery. There is at this day no school of painting but in France; and we shall rule by the book more surely perhaps, and for longer, than by the sword.

"Under Ernest's system the flowers of luxury would be suppressed—the beauty of woman, music, painting, and poetry. Society would not, indeed, be overthrown; but who would accept life on such terms? All that is useful is horrible and ugly. The kitchen is indispensable in a house, but you take good care never to stay in it; you live in a drawing-room ornamented, as this is, with perfectly superfluous things. Of what use are those beautiful pictures and all this carved woodwork? Nothing is beautiful but what we feel to be useless. We have called the sixteenth century the age of the Renaissance with admirable accuracy of expression. That century was the dawn of a new world; men will still talk of it when some preceding ages are forgotten, whose sole merit will be that they have existed—like the millions of beings that are of no account in a generation."

"'*Guenille, soit! ma guenille m'est chère*'* ('A poor thing, but mine own'),"said the Duc d'Hérouville playfully, during the silence that followed this pompous declamation of prose.

"But," said Butscha, taking up the cudgels against Canalis, "does the art exist which, according to you, is the sphere in which genius should disport itself? Is it not rather a magnificent fiction which social man is madly bent on believing? What need have I for a landscape in Normandy hanging in my room when I can go and see it so well done by God? We have in our dreams finer poems than the 'Iliad.' For a very moderate sum I can find at Valognes, at Carentan, as in Provence, at Arles, Venuses quite as lovely as Titian's. The 'Police News' publishes romances, different, indeed, from

* Lit.: Be it rags! my rags are my entertainment.

Walter Scott's, but with terrible endings in real blood, and not in ink. Happiness and virtue are far above art and genius!"

"Bravo, Butscha!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What did he say!" asked Canalis of la Brière, ceasing to watch Modeste, in whose eyes and attitude he read the delightful evidence of her artless admiration.

The scorn with which he had been treated, and, above all, the girl's disrespectful speech to her father, had so depressed the unhappy la Brière that he made no reply; his gaze, sadly fixed on Modeste, betrayed absorbed meditation. The little clerk's argument was, however, repeated with some wit by the Duc d'Hérouville, who ended by saying that the raptures of Saint Theresa were far superior to the inventions of Lord Byron.

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc," remarked Modeste, "that is wholly personal poetry, while Lord Byron's or Molière's is for the benefit of the world——"

"Then you must make your peace with the Baron," interrupted her father quickly. "Now you are insisting that genius is to be useful, as much so as cotton; but you will, perhaps, think logic as stale and out of date as your poor old father."

Butscha, la Brière, and Madame Latournelle exchanged half-laughing glances, which spurred Modeste on in her career of provocation, all the more because for a moment she was checked.

"Nay, mademoiselle," said Canalis with a smile, "we have not fought nor even contradicted each other. Every work of art, whether in literature, music, painting, sculpture, or architecture, carries with it a positive social utility, like that of any other form of commercial produce. Art is the truest form of commerce; it takes it for granted. A book in these days helps its writer to pocket about ten thousand francs, and its production involves printing, paper-making,

type-founding, and the bookseller's trade; that is to say, the occupation of thousands of hands. The performance of a symphony by Beethoven or of an opera by Rossini demands quite as many hands, machines, and forms of industry.

"The cost of a building is a still more tangible answer to the objection. It may, indeed, be said that works of genius rest on a very costly basis, and are necessarily profitable to the workingman."

Fairly started on this text, Canalis talked on for some minutes with a lavish use of imagery, and reveling in his own words; but it befell him, as often happens with great talkers, to find himself at the end of his harangue just where he started, and agreeing with la Brière, though he failed to perceive it.

"I discern with pleasure, my dear Baron," said the little Duke slily, "that you will make a great constitutional minister."

"Oh," returned Canalis, with an ostentatious flourish, "what do we prove by all our discussions? The eternal truth of this axiom, 'Everything is true and everything is false.' Moral truths, like living beings, may be placed in an atmosphere where they change their appearance to the point of being unrecognizable?"

"Society lives by condemned things," interposed the Duc d'Hérouville.

"What flippancy!" said Madame Latournelle in a low voice to her husband.

"He is a poet," said Gobenheim, who overheard her.

Canalis, who had soared ten leagues above his audience, and who was, perhaps, right in his final philosophical dictum, took the sort of chill he read on every face for a symptom of ignorance; but he saw that Modeste understood him, and was content; never discerning how offensive such a monologue is to country folk, whose one idea is to prove to Parisians the vitality, intelligence, and good judgment of the provinces.

"Is it long since you last saw the Duchesse de Chaulieu?" asked the Duke of Canalis, to change the subject.

"I saw her six days ago," replied Canalis.

"And is she well?"

"Perfectly well."

"Remember me to her, pray, when you write."

"I hear she is charming," Modeste remarked to the Duke.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he, "knows more about that than I do."

"She is more than charming," said Canalis, accepting the Duke's perfidious challenge. "But I am partial, mademoiselle; she has been my friend these ten years. I owe to her all that may be good in me; she has sheltered me from the perils of the world. Beside, the Duc de Chaulieu started me in the way I am going. But for their influence the King and Princesses would often have forgotten a poor poet as I am; my affection, therefore, is always full of gratitude."

And he spoke with tears in his voice.

"How much we all ought to love the woman who has inspired you with such sublime song and such a noble sentiment," said Modeste with feeling. "Can one conceive of a poet without a Muse?"

"He would have no heart," said Canalis; "he would write verse as dry as Voltaire's—who never loved any one but Voltaire."

"When I was in Paris," said Dumay, "did you not do me the honor of assuring me that you felt none of the feelings you expressed?"

"A straight hit, my worthy soldier," replied the poet with a smile; "but you must understand that at the same time it is allowable to have a great deal of heart in the intellectual life as well as in real life. A man may express very fine sentiments without feeling them, or feel them without being able to express them. La Brière, my friend there, loves to distraction," said he generously, as he looked at Modeste. "I, who

love at least as much as he does, believe—unless I am under an illusion—that I can give my passion a literary form worthy of its depth. Still, I will not answer for it, mademoiselle," he adroitly added, turning to Modeste with a rather over-elaborate grace, "that I shall not be bereft of my wits by to-morrow——"

And thus the poet triumphed over every obstacle, burning in honor of his love the sticks they tried to trip him up with, while Modeste was dazzled by this Parisian brilliancy, which was unfamiliar to her, and which lent a glitter to the orator's rhetoric.

"What a mountebank!" said Butscha in a whisper to Latournelle, after listening to a magniloquent tirade on the Catholic religion, and the happiness of having a pious wife, poured out in response to an observation from Madame Mignon.

Modeste had a bandage over her eyes; the effect of his delivery and the attention she intentionally devoted to Canalis prevented her perceiving what Butscha saw and noted—the declamatory tone, the lack of simplicity, rant taking the place of feeling, and all the incoherence which prompted the clerk's rather too severe epithet.

While Monsieur Mignon, Dumay, Butscha, and Latournelle wondered at the poet's want of sequence, overlooking, indeed, the inevitable digressions of conversation, which in France is always very devious, Modeste was admiring the poet's versatility, saying to herself as she led him to follow the tortuous windings of her fancy, "He loves me!"

Butscha, like all the other spectators of this performance, as we must call it, was struck by the chief fault of all egoists, which Canalis shows a little too much, like all men who are accustomed to speechify in drawing-rooms. Whether he knew beforehand what the other speaker meant to say, or merely did not listen, or had the power of listening while thinking of something else, Melchior wore the look of inat-

tention which is as disconcerting to another man's flow of words as it is wounding to his vanity.

Not to attend to what is said is not merely a lack of politeness; it is an expression of contempt. And Canalis carries this habit rather too far, for he often neglects to reply to a remark that requires an answer, and goes off to the subject he is absorbed in without any polite transition. Though this form of impertinence may be accepted without protest from a man of position, it nevertheless creates a leaven of hatred and vengeful feeling at the bottom of men's hearts; in an equal, it may even break up a friendship.

When by any chance Melchior compels himself to listen, he falls into another failing—he only lends himself, he does not give himself up. Nothing in social intercourse pays better than the bestowal of attention. "Blessed are they that hear!" is not only a precept of the Gospel, it is also an excellent speculation; act on it, and you will be forgiven everything, even vices. Canalis took much upon himself in the intention of charming Modeste; but while he was sacrificing himself to her, he was himself all the while with the others.

Modeste, pitiless for the ten persons she was martyrizing, begged Canalis to read them some piece of his verse; she wanted to hear a specimen of that much-praised elocution.

Canalis took the volume offered him by Modeste and cooed —for that is the correct word—the poem that is supposed to be his finest, an imitation of Moore's "Loves of the Angels," entitled "Vitalis," which was received with some yawns by Mesdames Latournelle and Dumay, by Gobenheim and the cashier.

"If you play whist well, monsieur," said Gobenheim, offering him five cards spread out in a fan, "I have never met with so accomplished a gentleman."

The remark made every one laugh, for it was the expression of the common wish.

"I play it well enough to be able to end my days in a

country town," replied Canalis. "There has, I dare say, been more of literature and conversation than whist players care to have," he added in an impertinent tone, flinging the book on to the side-table.

This incident shows what dangers are incurred by the hero of a salon when, like Canalis, he moves outside his orbit; he is then in the case of an actor who is a favorite with one particular public, but whose talent is wasted when he quits his own stage and ventures on to that of a superior theatre.

The Baron and the Duke were partners; Gobenheim played with Latournelle. Modeste sat down at the great poet's elbow, to the despair of Ernest, who marked on the capricious girl's countenance the progress of Canalis' fascination. La Brière had not known the power of seduction possessed by Melchior, and often denied by nature to genuine souls, who are generally shy. This gift demands a boldness and readiness of spirit which might be called the acrobatic agility of the mind; it even allows of a little part-playing; but is there not, morally speaking, always something of the actor in a poet? There is, indeed, a wide difference between expressing feelings we do not experience though we can imagine them in all their variety, and pretending to have them when they seem necessary to success on the stage of private life; and yet, if the hypocrisy needful to a man of the world has cankered the poet, he easily transfuses the powers of his talent into the expression of the required sentiment, just as a great man who has buried himself in solitude at last finds his heart overflowing into his brain.

"He is playing for millions," thought la Brière in anguish; "and he will act passion so well that Modeste will believe in it!"

And instead of showing himself more delightful and wittier than his rival, la Brière, like the Duc d'Hérouville, sat gloomy, uneasy, and on the watch; but while the courtier was studying the heiress' vagaries, Ernest was a prey to the misery of black

and concentrated jealousy, and had not yet won a single glance from his idol. He presently went into the garden for a few minutes with Butscha.

"It is all over, she is crazy about him," said he. "I am worse than disagreeable—and, after all, she is right! Canalis is delightful, he is witty even in his silence, he has passion in his eyes, poetry in his harangues——"

"Is he an honest man?" asked Butscha.

"Oh, yes," replied la Brière. "He is loyal, chivalrous, and under Modeste's influence he is quite capable of getting over the little faults he has acquired under Madame de Chaulieu——"

"You are a good fellow!" exclaimed the little hunchback. "But is he capable of loving—will he love her?"

"I do not know," replied Ernest. "Has she mentioned me?" he asked after a short silence.

"Yes," said Butscha, and he repeated what Modeste had said about borrowing a disguise.

The young fellow threw himself on a seat and hid his face in his hands. He could not restrain his tears, and would not let Butscha see them; but the dwarf was the man to guess them.

"What is wrong, monsieur?" asked he.

"She is right!" cried la Brière, suddenly sitting up. "I am a wretch."

He told the story of the trick he had been led into by Canalis, explaining to Butscha that he had wished to undeceive Modeste before she had unmasked; and he overflowed in rather childish lamentations over the perversity of his fate. Butscha's sympathy recognized this as love in its most vigorous and youthful artlessness, in its genuine and deep anxiety.

"But why," said he, "do you not make the best of yourself to Mademoiselle Modeste, instead of leaving your rival to prance alone?"

"Ah! you evidently never felt your throat tighten as soon

as you tried to speak to her," said la Brière. "Do you not feel a sensation at the roots of your hair and all over your skin when she looks at you, even without seeing you?"

"Still you had your wits about you sufficiently to be deeply grieved when she as good as told her father that he was an old woman."

"Monsieur, I love her too truly not to have felt it like a dagger-thrust when I heard her thus belie the perfection I ascribed to her!"

"But Canalis, you see, justified her," replied Butscha.

"If she has more vanity than good feeling, she would not be worth regretting!" said Ernest.

At this moment Modeste came out to breathe the freshness of the starlit night with Canalis (who had been losing at cards), her father, and Madame Dumay. While his daughter walked on with Melchior, Charles Mignon left her and came up to la Brière.

"Your friend ought to have been an advocate, monsieur," said he with a smile, and looking narrowly at the young man.

"Do not be in a hurry to judge a poet with the severity you might exercise on an ordinary man, like me, for instance, Monsieur le Comte," said la Brière. "The poet has his mission. He is destined by nature to see the poetical side of every question, just as he expresses the poetry of everything; thus when you fancy that he is arguing against himself, he is faithful to his calling. He is a painter ready to represent either a Madonna or a courtesan. Molière is alike right in his pictures of old men and young men, and Molière certainly had a sound judgment. These sports of fancy which corrupt second-rate minds have no influence over the character of really great men."

Charles Mignon pressed the young fellow's hand, saying, "At the same time, this versatility might be used by a man to justify himself for actions diametrically antagonistic, especially in politics."

At this moment Canalis was saying in an insinuating voice, in reply to some saucy remark of Modeste's: "Ah, mademoiselle, never believe that the multiplicity of emotions can in any degree diminish strength of feeling. Poets, more than other men, must love with constancy and truth. In the first place, do not be jealous of what is called 'The Muse.' Happy is the wife of a busy man! If you could but hear the lamentations of the wives who are crushed under the idleness of husbands without employment, or to whom wealth gives much leisure, you would know that the chief happiness of a Parisian woman is liberty, sovereignty in her home. And we poets allow the wife to hold the sceptre, for we cannot possibly condescend to the tyranny exerted by small minds. We have something better to do. If ever I should marry, which I vow is a very remote disaster in my life, I should wish my wife to enjoy the perfect moral liberty which a mistress always preserves, and which is perhaps the source of all her seductiveness."

Canalis put forth all his spirit and grace in talking of love, marriage, the worship of woman, and arguing with Modeste, but presently Monsieur Mignon, who came to join them, seized a moment's silence to take his daughter by the arm and lead her back to Ernest, whom the worthy colonel had advised to attempt some explanation.

"Mademoiselle," said Ernest in a broken voice, "I cannot possibly endure to remain here the object of your scorn. I do not defend myself, I make no attempt at justification; I only beg to point out to you that before receiving your flattering letter addressed to the man and not to the poet—your last letter—I desired, and by a letter written at le Havre I intended, to dispel the mistake under which you wrote. All the feelings I have had the honor of expressing to you are sincere. A hope beamed on me when, in Paris, your father told me that he was poor; but now, if all is lost, if nothing is left to me but eternal regrets, why should I stay where there is nothing

for me but torture? Let me only take away with me one smile from you. It will remain graven on my heart."

"Monsieur," said Modeste, who appeared cold and absent-minded, "I am not the mistress here; but I certainly should deeply regret keeping any one here who should find neither pleasure nor happiness in staying."

She turned away, and took Madame Dumay's arm to go back into the house. A few minutes later all the personages of this domestic drama, once more united in the drawing-room, were surprised to see Modeste sitting by the Duc d'Hérouville, and flirting with him in the best style of the most wily Parisienne. She watched his play, gave him advice when he asked it, and took opportunities of saying flattering things to him, placing the chance advantage of noble birth on the same level as that of talent or of beauty.

Canalis knew, or fancied he knew, the reason for this caprice; he had tried to pique Modeste by speaking of marriage as a disaster and seeming to be averse to it; but, like all who play with fire, it was he who was burnt. Modeste's pride and disdain alarmed the poet; he came up to her, making a display of jealousy all the more marked because it was assumed. Modeste, as implacable as the angels, relished the pleasure she felt in the exercise of her power, and naturally carried it too far. The Duc d'Hérouville had never been so well treated: a woman smiled on him!

At eleven o'clock, an unheard-of hour at the chalet, the three rivals left, the Duke thinking Modeste charming, Canalis regarding her as a coquette, and la Brière heart-broken by her relentlessness.

For a week the heiress still remained to her three admirers just what she had been on that evening, so that the poet seemed to have triumphed in spite of the whims and freaks which from time to time inspired some hopes in the Duc d'Hérouville. Modeste's irreverence to her father and the

liberties she took with him ; her irritability toward her blind mother, as she half-grudgingly did her the little services which formerly had been the delight of her filial affection, seemed to be the outcome of a wayward temper and liveliness tolerated in her childhood. When Modeste went too far she would assert a code of her own, and ascribe her levity and fractiousness to her spirit of independence. She owned to Canalis and the Duke that she hated obedience, and regarded this as an obstacle in the way of marriage, thus sounding her suitors' character after the manner of those who pierce the soil to bring up gold, coal, stone, or water.

"I shall never find a husband," she said, the day before that on which the family were to reinstate themselves in the villa, "who will endure my caprices with such kindness as my father's, which has never failed for an instant, or the indulgence of my adorable mother."

"They know that you love them, mademoiselle," said la Brière.

"Be assured, mademoiselle, that your husband will know the full value of his treasure," added the Duke.

"You have more wit and spirit than are needed to break in a husband," said Canalis, laughing.

Modeste smiled, as Henri IV. may have smiled when, by extracting three answers to an insidious question, he had revealed to some foreign ambassador the character of his three leading ministers.

On the day of the dinner, Modeste, led away by her preference for Canalis, walked alone with him for some time up and down the graveled walk leading from the house to the lawn with its flower-beds. It was easy to perceive, from the poet's gestures and the young heiress' demeanor, that she was lending a favorable ear to Canalis, and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville came out to interrupt a *tête-à-tête* that scandalized them. With the tact natural to women in such cases, they turned the conversation to the subject of the court, of the

high position conferred by an office under the crown, explaining the difference subsisting between an appointment to the household and one held under the crown; they tried, in fact, to intoxicate Modeste by appealing to her pride, and displaying to her one of the highest positions which a woman at that time could hope to attain.

"To have a duke in your son," cried the old lady, "is a positive distinction. The mere title is a fortune, out of reach of reverses, to bequeath to your children."

"To what ill-fortune," said Canalis, very ill pleased at this interruption to his conversation, "must we attribute the small success that the master of the horse has hitherto achieved in the matter in which that title is supposed to be of most service as supporting a man's pretensions?"

The two unmarried ladies shot a look at Canalis as full of venom as a viper's fangs, but were so put out of countenance by Modeste's sarcastic smile that they had not a word in reply.

"The master of the horse," said Modeste to Canalis, "has never blamed you for the diffidence you have learned from your fame; why then grudge him his modesty?"

"Also," said the Duke's aunt, "we have not yet met with a wife worthy of my nephew's rank. Some we have seen who had merely the fortune that might suit the position; others who, without the fortune, had indeed the right spirit; and I must confess that we have done well to wait till God should give us the opportunity of making acquaintance with a young lady in whom should be united both the noble soul and the handsome fortune of a Duchesse d'Hérouville!"

"My dear Modeste," said Hélène d'Hérouville, walking away a few steps with her new friend, "there are a thousand Barons de Canalis in the kingdom, and a hundred poets in Paris who are as good as he; and he is so far from being a great man, that I, a poor girl, fated to take the veil for lack of a dower, would have nothing to say to him! And you do not know, I dare say, that he is a man who has, for the last

ten years, been at the beck and call of the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Really, none but an old woman of sixty could put up with the endless little ailments with which, it is said, the poet is afflicted, the least of which was unendurable in Louis XVI. Still, the Duchess, of course, does not suffer from them as his wife would; he is not so constantly with her as a husband would be——"

And so by one of the manœuvres peculiar to woman against woman, Hélène d'Hérouville whispered in every ear the calumnies which women, jealous of Madame de Chaulieu, propagated concerning the poet. This trivial detail, not rare in the gossip of young girls, shows that the Comte de la Bastie's fortune was already made the object of ardent rivalry.

Within ten days, opinions at the chalet had varied considerably about the three men who aspired to Modeste's hand. This change, wholly to the disadvantage of Canalis, was founded on considerations calculated to make the hero of any form of fame reflect deeply. When we see the passion with which an autograph is craved, it is impossible to doubt that public curiosity is strongly excited by celebrity. Most provincials, it is evident, have no very exact idea of the manner in which illustrious persons fasten their cravat, walk on the boulevard, gape at the crows, or eat a cutlet; for, as soon as they see a man wearing the halo of fashion, or resplendent with popularity—more or less transient, no doubt, but always the object of envy—they are ready to exclaim, "Ah! so that is the thing!" or, "Well, that is odd!" or something equally absurd. In a word, the strange charm that is produced by every form of renown, even when justly acquired, has no permanence. To superficial minds, especially to the sarcastic and the envious, it is an impression as swift as a lightning-flash, and never repeated. Glory, it would seem, like the sun, is hot and luminous from afar, but, when we get near, it is as cold as the peak of an Alp. Perhaps a man is really great only to his peers; perhaps the defects inherent in the

conditions of humanity are more readily lost to their eyes than to those of vulgar admirers. Thus, to be constantly pleasing, a poet would be compelled to display the deceptive graces of those persons who can win forgiveness for their obscurity by amiable manners and agreeable speeches, since, beside genius, the vapid drawing-room virtues and harmless domestic twaddle are exacted from him.

The great poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, who refused to yield to this law of society, found that insulting indifference soon took the place of the fascination at first caused by his conversation at evening parties. Cleverness too prodigally displayed produces the same effect on the mind as a shop full of cut-glass has on the eyes; this sufficiently explains that Canalis' glitter soon wearied those people who, to use their own words, like something solid. Then, under the necessity of appearing an ordinary man, the poet found many rocks ahead where la Brière could win the good opinion of those who, at first, had thought him sullen. They felt the desire to be revenged on Canalis for his reputation by making more of his friend. The most kindly people are so made. The amiable and unpretentious referendary shocked nobody's vanity; falling back on him, every one discerned his good heart, his great modesty, the discretion of a strong box, and delightful manners. On political questions the Duc d'Hérouville held Ernest far above Canalis. The poet, as erratic, ambitious, and mutable as Tasso, loved luxury and splendor, and ran into debt; while the young lawyer, even-minded, living prudently, and useful without officiousness, hoped for promotion without asking it, and was saving money meanwhile.

Canalis had indeed justified the good people who were watching him. For the last two or three days he had given way to fits of irritability, of depression, of melancholy, without any apparent cause—the caprices of temper that come of the nervous poetical temperament. These eccentricities—as

they are called in a country town—had their cause in the wrong, which each day made worse, that he was doing to the Duchesse de Chaulieu, to whom he knew he ought to write, without being able to make up his mind to do it; they were anxiously noted by the gentle American and worthy Madame Latournelle, and more than once came under discussion between them and Madame Mignon. Canalis, knowing nothing of these discussions, felt their effect. He was no longer listened to with the same attention, the faces round him did not express the rapture of the first days, while Ernest was beginning to be listened to. For the last few days the poet had, therefore, been bent on captivating Modeste, and seized every moment when he could be alone with her to cast over her the tangles of the most impassioned language. Modeste's heightened color plainly showed the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville with what pleasure the heiress heard insinuating conceits charmingly spoken; and, uneasy at the poet's rapid advances, they had recourse to the *ultima ratio* of women in such predicaments—to calumny, which rarely misses its aim when it appeals to vehement physical repulsion.

As he sat down to dinner the poet saw a cloud on his idol's brow, and read in it Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's perfidy; so he decided that he must offer himself as a husband to Modeste at the first opportunity he should have of speaking to her. As he and the two noble damsels exchanged some sub-acid, though polite remarks, Gobenheim nudged Butscha, who sat next to him, to look at the poet and the master of the horse.

"They will demolish each other," said he in a whisper.

"Canalis has genius enough to demolish himself unaided," said the dwarf.

In the course of the dinner, which was extremely splendid and served to perfection, the Duke achieved a great triumph over Canalis. Modeste, whose riding-habit had arrived the evening before, talked of the various rides to be taken in the

neighborhood. In the course of the conversation that ensued she was led to express a strong wish to see a hunt—a pleasure she had never known. The Duke at once proposed to arrange a hunt for Mademoiselle Mignon's benefit in one of the crown forest-lands a few leagues from le Havre. Thanks to his connection with the master of the King's hounds, the Prince de Cadignan, he had it in his power to show Modeste a scene of royal magnificence, to charm her by showing her the dazzling world of a court, and making her wish to enter it by marriage. The glances exchanged by the Duke and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, which Canalis happened to catch, distinctly said, "The heiress is ours!" enough to urge the poet, who was reduced to mere personal glitter, to secure some pledge of her affection without loss of time.

Modeste, somewhat scared at having gone further than she intended with the d'Hérouvilles, after dinner, when they were walking in the grounds, went forward a little distance in a rather marked manner, accompanied by Melchior. With a young girl's not illegitimate curiosity, she allowed him to guess the calumnies repeated by Hélène, and, on a remonstrance from Canalis, she pledged him to secrecy, which he promised.

"These lashes of the tongue," said he, "are fair war in the world of fashion; your simplicity is scared by them; for my part, I can laugh at them—nay, I enjoy them. Those ladies must think his lordship's interests seriously imperiled, or they would not have recourse to them."

Then, profiting by the opportunity given by such a piece of information, Canalis justified himself with so much mocking wit and passion so ingeniously expressed, while thanking Modeste for her confidence, in which he insisted in seeing a slight strain of love, that she found herself quite as deeply compromised toward the poet as she was toward the Duke. Canalis felt that daring was necessary; he declared himself in plain terms. He paid his vows to Modeste in a style

through which his poetic fancy shone like a moon ingeniously staged, with a brilliant picture of herself—beautifully fair, and arrayed to admiration for this family festival. The inspiration so cleverly called up, and encouraged by the complicity of the evening, the grove, the sky, and the earth, led the grasping lover beyond all reason; for he even talked of his disinterestedness, and succeeded by the flowers of his eloquence in giving a new aspect to Diderot's stale theme of "Five hundred francs and my Sophie," or the "Give me a cottage and your heart!" of every lover who knows that his father-in-law has a fortune.

"Monsieur," said Modeste, after enjoying the music of this concerto so admirably composed on "a familiar theme," "my parents leave me such freedom as has allowed me to hear you; but you must address yourself to them."

"Well, then," cried Canalis, "only tell me that if I get their consent you will be quite satisfied to obey them."

"I know beforehand," said she, "that my father has some wishes which might offend the legitimate pride of a family as old as yours, for he is bent on transmitting his title and his name to his grandsons."

"Oh, my dear Modeste, what sacrifice would I not make to place my life in the hands of such a guardian angel as you are!"

"You must allow me not to decide my fate for life in one moment," said she, going to join the Demoiselles d'Hérouville.

These two ladies were at that minute flattering little Latournelle's vanity in the hope of securing him to their interests. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, to whom we must give the family name to distinguish her from her niece Hélène, was conveying to the notary that the place of president of the court at le Havre, which Charles X. would give to a man recommended by them, was an appointment due to his honesty and talents as a lawyer. Butscha, who was walking with la Brière, in

great alarm at Melchior's audacity and rapid progress, found means to speak to Modeste for a few minutes at the bottom of the garden steps as the party went indoors to give themselves up to the vexations of the inevitable rubber.

"Mademoiselle, I hope you do not yet address him as Melchior," said he in an undertone.

"Not far short of it, my mysterious dwarf," she replied, with a smile that might have seduced an angel.

"Good God!" cried the clerk, dropping his hands, which almost touched the steps.

"Well, and is he not as good as that odious gloomy referendary in whom you take so much interest?" cried she, putting on for Ernest a haughty look of scorn, such as young girls alone have the secret of, as though their maidenhood lent them wings to soar so high. "Would your little Monsieur de la Brière take me without a settlement?" she added after a pause.

"Ask your father," replied Butscha, going a few steps on, so as to lead Modeste to a little distance from the windows. "Listen to me, mademoiselle. You know that I who speak to you am ready to lay down not my life only, but my honor for you, at any time, at any moment. So you can believe in me, you can trust me with things you would not perhaps tell your father. Well, has that sublime Canalis ever spoken to you in the disinterested way that allows you to cast such a taunt at poor Ernest?"

"Yes."

"And you believe him?"

"That, malignant clerk," said she, giving him one of the ten or twelve nicknames she had devised for him, "is, as it seems to me, casting a doubt on the strength of my self-respect."

"You can laugh, dear mademoiselle, so it cannot be serious. I can only hope that you are making a fool of him."

"What would you think of me, Monsieur Butscha, if I

thought I had any right to mock at either of the gentlemen who do me the honor to wish for me as a wife? I can tell you, Master John, that even when she appears to scorn the most contemptible admiration, a girl is always flattered at having it offered to her."

"Then I flatter you——?" said the clerk, his face lighting up as a town is illuminated on some great occasion.

"You——?" said she. "You give me the most precious kind of friendship, a feeling as disinterested as that of a mother for her child! Do not compare yourself to any one else, for even my father is obliged to yield to me." She paused. "I cannot tell you that I love you, in the sense men give to the word; but what I feel for you is eternal and can never know any change."

"Well, then," said Butscha, stooping to pick up a pebble that he might leave a kiss and a tear on the tip of Modeste's shoe, "let me watch over you as a dragon watches over a treasure. The poet spreads before you just now all the filigree of his elaborate phrases, the tinsel of his promises. He sang of love to the sweetest chord of his lyre, no doubt? If, when this noble lover is fully assured of your having but a small fortune, you should see his demeanor change; if you then find him cold and embarrassed, will you still make him your husband, still honor him with your esteem?"

"Can he be a Francisque Althor?" she asked, with an expression of the deepest disgust.

"Let me have the pleasure of working this transformation scene," said Butscha. "Not only do I intend that it shall be sudden, but I do not despair of restoring your poet to you afterward, in love once more, of making him blow hot and cold on your heart with as good a grace as when he argues for and against the same thing in the course of a single evening, sometimes without being aware of it——"

"And if you are right," said she, "whom can I trust?"

"The man who truly loves you."

"The little Duke?"

Butscha looked at Modeste. They both walked on a few steps in silence. The girl was impenetrable; she did not wince.

"Mademoiselle, will you allow me to put into words the thoughts that lurk at the bottom of your heart like water-mosses in a pool, and that you refuse to explain to yourself even?"

"Why, indeed!" cried Modeste, "is my privy councilor-in-waiting a mirror, too?"

"No, but an echo," he replied, with a little bow stamped with the utmost modesty. "The Duke loves you, but he loves you too well. I, a dwarf, have fully understood the exquisite delicacy of your soul. You would hate to be adored like the holy wafer in a monstrance. But, being so eminently a woman, you could no more bear to see a man of whom you were always secure perpetually at your feet, than you could endure an egoist like Canalis, who would always care more for himself than for you. Why? I know not. I would I could be a woman, and an old woman, to learn the reason of the programme I can read in your eyes, which is perhaps that of every girl.

"At the same time, your lofty soul craves for adoration. When a man is at your feet you cannot throw yourself at his. 'But you cannot go far in that way,' Voltaire used to say. So the little Duke has, morally speaking, too many genuflexions, and Canalis not enough—not to say none at all. And I can read the mischief hidden in your smile when you are speaking to the master of the horse, when he speaks to you and you reply. You would never be unhappy with the Duke; everybody would be pleased if you chose him for your husband; but you would not love him. The coldness of egoism and the excessive fervor of perennial raptures no doubt have a negative effect on the heart of every woman.

"Obviously this is not the perpetual triumph that you would

enjoy in the infinite delights of such a marriage as that you dream of, in which you would find a submission to be proud of, great little sacrifices that are gladly unconfessed, successes looked forward to with rapture, and unforeseen magnanimity to which it is a joy to yield; in which a woman finds herself understood even to her deepest secrets, while her love is sometimes a protection to her protector——"

"You are a wizard!" cried Modeste.

"Nor will you meet with that enchanting equality of feeling, that constant sharing of life, and that certainty of giving happiness which makes marriage acceptable, if you marry a Canalis, a man who thinks only of himself, to whom *I* is the only note in the scale, and whose attention has not yet condescended so low as to listen to your father or the Duke. An ambitious man, not of the first class, to whom your dignity and supremacy matter little, who will treat you as a necessary chattel in his house, who insults you already by his indifference on points of honor. Yes, if you allowed yourself to go so far as to slap your mother, Monsieur Canalis would shut his eyes that he might not see your guilt, so hungry is he for your fortune!

"So, mademoiselle, I was not thinking of the great poet, who is but a little actor, nor of my lord Duke, who would be for you a splendid match, but not a husband——"

"Butscha, my heart is a blank page on which you yourself write what you read," replied Modeste. "You are carried away by your provincial hatred of everything that compels you to look above your head. You cannot forgive the poet for being a political man, for having an eloquent tongue, and a splendid future; you calumniate his purpose——"

"His, mademoiselle! He would turn his back on you within twenty-four hours with the meanness of a Vilquin."

"Well, make him play such a farcical scene, and——"

"Ay, and in every key; in three days—on Wednesday—do not forget. Until then, mademoiselle, amuse yourself by

making the musical box play all its airs, that the vile discords of the antiphony may come out all the more clearly."

Modeste gayly returned to the drawing-room, where of all the men present, la Brière alone, seated in the recess of a window—whence, no doubt, he had been looking at his idol—rose at her entrance, as if an usher had shouted, "The Queen!" It was a respectful impulse, full of the eloquence peculiar to action, which surpasses that of the finest speech. Spoken love is not to be compared with love in action—every girl of twenty is fifty as concerns this axiom; this is the seducer's strongest argument.

Instead of looking Modeste in the face, as Canalis did, bowing to her as an act of public homage, the disdained lover watched her with a slow side-glance, as humble as Butscha's, almost timid. The young heiress observed this demeanor as she went to place herself by Canalis, in whose game she affected an interest. In the course of the conversation la Brière learned, from a remark she made to her father, that Modeste intended to begin riding again on the following Wednesday, and she mentioned that she had no riding-whip suitable to match with her handsome new habit. Ernest flashed a glance at the dwarf like a spark of fire, and a few minutes later they were walking together on the terrace.

"It is now nine o'clock," said la Brière. "I am off to Paris as fast as my horse will carry me. I can be there by ten to-morrow morning. My dear Butscha, from you she will accept a gift with pleasure, for she has a great regard for you; let me give her a riding-whip in your name; and, believe me, in return for such an immense favor you have in me not indeed a friend, but a slave!"

"Go; you are happy," said the clerk. "You have money."

"Tell Canalis from me that I shall not be in to-night, and that he must invent some excuse for my absence for two days."

An hour later Ernest had set out on horseback for Paris, where he arrived after twelve hours' riding, his first care being to secure a place in the mail-coach for le Havre on the following day. He then went to the three first jewelers in Paris, comparing handles of riding-whips, and seeking what art could produce of the most royal perfection. He found one made by Stidmann for a Russian lady, who, after ordering it, had been unable to pay for it—a fox-hunt wrought in gold, with a ruby at the top, and exorbitantly expensive as compared with a referendary's stipend; all his savings were swallowed up, amounting to seven thousand francs. Ernest gave a sketch of the arms of la Bastie, allowing twenty hours for them to be engraved instead of those that were on it. This handle, a masterpiece of workmanship, was fitted to an india-rubber whip, and placed in a red morocco case, lined with velvet, with a monogram of two M's on the top.

By Wednesday morning la Brière had returned by the mail, in time to breakfast with Canalis. The poet had explained his secretary's absence by saying that he was busy with some work forwarded from Paris. Butscha, who had gone to the coach office to hold out a welcoming hand to Ernest on the arrival of the mail, flew to give this work of art to Françoise Cochet, desiring her to place it on Modeste's dressing-table.

"You are going out riding, no doubt, with Mademoiselle Modeste," said Butscha, on returning to Canalis' villa to inform Ernest, by a side-glance, that the whip had safely reached its destination.

"I!" said la Brière. "I am going to bed."

"Well!" exclaimed Canalis, looking at his friend, "I do not understand you at all."

Breakfast was ready, and the poet naturally invited the clerk to sit down with them. Butscha had stayed, intending to get himself invited if necessary by la Brière, seeing on Germain's countenance the success of a hunchback's trick, of which his promise to Modeste may have given a hint.

"Monsieur was very wise to keep Monsieur Latournelle's clerk," said Germain in his master's ear. Canalis and Germain, on a hint from the latter, passed into the drawing-room. "This morning I went out to see some fishing, an expedition to which I was invited the day before yesterday by the owner of a boat I have made acquaintance with."

Germain did not confess that he had had such bad taste as to play billiards in a café in le Havre, where Butscha had surrounded him with a number of his friends in order to be able to work upon him.

"What then?" said Canalis. "Come to the point, and at once."

"Monsieur le Baron, I heard a discussion about Monsieur Mignon, which I did my best to keep going—no one knew who I lived with. I tell you, Monsieur le Baron, everybody in le Havre says that you are running your head against a wall. Mademoiselle de la Bastie's fortune is, like her name, very modest. The ship on which the father came home is not his own; it belongs to some China merchants, with whom he has to settle, and things are said about it that are far from flattering to the colonel. Having heard that you and Monsieur le Duc were rivals for Mademoiselle de la Bastie, I take the liberty of mentioning it; for, between you and him, it is better that his lordship should swallow the bait. On my way back I took a turn on the quay, past the theatre, where the merchants walk up and down, and I pushed my way boldly among them. These worthy folk, seeing a well-dressed man, began to talk about the affairs of the town; from one thing to another I led them to speak of Colonel Mignon; and they were so much of the same mind as the fishermen that I felt it my duty to speak. That is why I left you, sir, to get up and dress alone——"

"What is to be done?" cried Canalis, feeling that he was too deeply pledged to withdraw from his promises to Modeste.

"You know my attachment to you, sir," said Germain,

seeing that the poet was thunderstruck, "and you will not be surprised if I offer a piece of advice. If you can make this clerk drunk, he will let the cat out of the bag, and if he won't open his mouth for two bottles of champagne, he certainly will for the third. It would be a strange thing, too, if monsieur, who will certainly be an ambassador one day, for Philoxène heard Madame la Duchesse say so—if you, sir, cannot get round a country lawyer's clerk."

At this moment Butscha, the unknown author of this fishing expedition, was begging the referendary to say nothing about his journey to Paris, and not to interfere with his manœuvres at breakfast. Butscha meant to take advantage of a reaction of feeling unfavorable to Charles Mignon, which had set in at le Havre.

This was the cause of that reaction: Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie had entirely ignored those of his former friends who, during his absence, had neglected his wife and children. On hearing that a dinner was to be given at the Villa Mignon, each one flattered himself that he would be among the guests, and expected an invitation; but when it was known that only Gobenheim, the Latournelles, the Duke, and the two Parisians were to be asked, there was a loud outcry at the merchant's arrogance; his marked avoidance of seeing anybody and of ever going down to le Havre was commented on and attributed to scorn, on which the whole town avenged itself by casting doubts on Mignon's sudden wealth. By dint of gossip everybody soon ascertained that the money advanced to Vilquin on the villa had been found by Dumay. This fact gave the most malignant persons grounds for the libelous supposition that Charles had confided to Dumay's known devotion the funds concerning which he anticipated litigation on the part of his so-called partners in Canton. Charles' reticence, for his constant aim was to conceal his wealth, and the gossip of his servants, who had been put on their guard, lent an appearance of truth to these monstrous fables, believed

by all who were governed by the spirit of detraction that animates rival traders. In proportion as parochial pride had formerly cried up his immense fortune as one of the makers of le Havre, so now provincial jealousy cast doubts on it.

Butscha, to whom the fishermen of the port owed more than one good turn, desired them to be secret, and to cram their new friend. He was well served. The owner of the boat told Germain that a cousin of his, a sailor, was coming from Marseilles, having just been paid off in consequence of the sale of the brig in which the colonel had come home. The vessel was being sold by order of one Castagnould, and the cargo—according to the cousin—was worth only three or four hundred thousand francs at most.

"Germain," said Canalis, as the servant was leaving the room, "bring us up some champagne and some bordeaux. A member of the legal factor of Normandy must carry away some memories of a poet's hospitality. And he has the wit of 'le Figaro,'" added Canalis, laying his hand on the dwarf's shoulder; "that *petit-journal* brilliancy must be made to sparkle and foam with the wine of champagne; we will not spare ourselves either, Ernest! Why, it is two years at least since I last got tipsy," he added, turning to la Brière.

"With wine? That I can quite understand," replied the clerk. "You get tipsy with yourself every day! In the matter of praise, you drink your fill. You are handsome; you are famous during your lifetime; your conversation is on a level with your genius; and you fascinate all the women, even my master's wife. Loved as you are by the most beautiful Sultana Valideh I ever saw—it is true, I have never seen another—you can, if you choose, marry Mademoiselle de la Bastie. Why, merely with making this inventory of your present advantages, to say nothing of the future—a fine title, a peerage, an embassy! I am quite fuddled, like the men who bottle wine for other people to drink."

"All this social magnificence is nothing," replied Canalis,

"without that which gives them value—a fortune! Here we are men among men; fine sentiments are delightful in stanzas."

"And in certain circum*stanzas*," said Butscha, with a significant shrug.

"You, a master of the mystery of settlements," said the poet, smiling at the pun, "must know as well as I do that cottage rhymes to nothing better than pottage."

At table Butscha played with signal success the part of le Rigaudin in "la Maison en Loterie," alarming Ernest, to whom the jests of a lawyer's office were unfamiliar; they are a match for those of the studio. The clerk repeated all the scandal of le Havre, the history of every fortune, of every boudoir, and of all the crimes committed just outside the pale of the law, what is called sailing as close hauled as possible (in Normandy, *se tirer d'affaire comme on peut*). He spared no one, and his spirits rose with the stream of wine he poured down his throat like storm-water through a gutter.

"Do you know, la Brière," said Canalis, filling up Butscha's glass, "that this brave boy would be a first-rate secretary to an ambassador?"

"And cut out his master!" retorted the dwarf with a look at Canalis, of insolence redeemed by the sparkle of carbonic acid gas. "I have enough spirit of intrigue and little enough gratitude to climb on to your shoulders. A poet supporting an abortion! Well, it has been seen, and pretty frequently—in libraries. Why, you are staring at me as if I were swallowing swords. Heh! my dear, great genius, you are a very superior man; you know full well that gratitude is a word for idiots; it is to be found in the dictionary, but not in the human heart. I O U is a formula unhonored on the green banks of Parnassus or Pindus. Do you suppose I feel the debt to my master's wife for having brought me up? Why, the whole town has paid it off in esteem, praise, and admiration, the most precious of all coin. I do not see the virtue

Murray Smith

"YOU WILL MAKE ME DRUNK," SAID THE CLERK.

that is merely an investment for the benefit of one's vanity. Men make a trade of reciprocal services; the word gratitude represents the debit side, that is all.

"As to intrigue, I adore it! What!" he went on, in reply to a gesture from Canalis, "do you not delight in the faculty which enables a crafty man to get the upper hand of a man of genius, which requires constant observation of the vices and weaknesses of our betters, and a sense of the nick of time for everything? Ask diplomacy whether the triumph of cunning over strength is not the most delightful success there is. If I were your secretary, Monsieur le Baron, you would soon be prime minister, because it would be to my interest! Now, would you like a sample of my little talents of that kind? Hearken! You love Mademoiselle Modeste to distraction, and you are very right. In my opinion, the girl is a genuine Parisienne, for here and there a Parisienne sprouts in the country. Our Modeste would be a wife to push a man. She has that sort of thing," said he, giving his hand a twirl in the air. "You have a formidable rival in the Duke. Now, what will you give me to pack him off within three days?"

"Let us finish this bottle," said the poet, refilling Butscha's glass.

"You will make me drunk!" said the clerk, swallowing down his ninth glass of champagne. "Is there a bed where I may sleep for an hour? My master is as sober as a camel, the old fox, and Madame Latournelle too. They would both be hard upon me, and they would have good reason, while I should have lost mine, and I have some work to do."

Then going back to a former subject without any transition, after the manner of a man when he is screwed, he exclaimed—

"And then, what a memory I have! It is a match for my gratitude."

"Butscha!" exclaimed the poet, "just now you said that you had no gratitude; you are contradicting yourself."

"Not at all," said the clerk. "Forgetting almost always means remembering! Now, then, on we go! I am made to be a secretary."

"And how will you set to work to get rid of the Duke?" asked Canalis, charmed to find the conversation tending naturally to the subjects he aimed at.

"That—is no concern of yours," said Butscha, with a tremendous hiccough.

Butscha rolled his head on his shoulders, and his eyes from Germain to la Brière, and from la Brière to Canalis, in the manner of a man who feels intoxication creeping over him, and wants to know in what esteem he is held; for in the wreck of drunkenness it may be noted that self-esteem is the last sentiment to float.

"Look here, great poet, you are a jolly fellow, you are. Do you take me for one of your readers, you who sent your friend to Paris to procure information concerning the house of Mignon. I humbug, you humbug, we humbug. Well and good; but do me the honor to believe that I am clear-headed enough always to keep as much conscience as I need in my sphere of life. As head clerk to Maître Latournelle my heart is a padlocked despatch-box, my lips never breathe a word of any paper concerning the clients. I know everything, and I know nothing. And then, passion is no secret: I love Modeste, she is a pupil of mine, she must marry well; and I could get round the Duke if necessary. But you are going to marry——"

"Germain, coffee and liqueurs," said Canalis to his manservant.

"Liqueurs?" repeated Butscha, holding up a forbidding hand like a too knowing maiden putting aside some little temptation. "Oh, my poor work! By the way, there is a marriage contract to be drawn up, and my second clerk is as stupid as a matrimonial bargain, and quite capable of p-p-poking a penknife through the bride's personal property. He

thinks himself a fine fellow because he measures nearly six feet—the idiot!"

"Here, this is crème de thé, a West India liqueur," said Canalis. "You who are Mademoiselle Modeste's most trusty adviser——"

"Her adviser?——"

"Well, do you think she loves me?"

"Ye-e-es, more than she loves the Duke," drawled the dwarf, rousing himself from a sort of torpor, which he acted to admiration. "She loves you for your disinterestedness. She told me that for you she felt equal to the greatest sacrifices, to giving up dress, spending only a thousand francs a year, devoting her life to prove to you that in marrying her you would have done a good stroke of business. And she is devilish honest (hiccough), I can tell you, and well informed; there is nothing that girl does not know."

"That and three hundred thousand francs," said Canalis.

"Oh! there may be as much as you say," replied the clerk with enthusiasm. "Mignon Papa—and you see he is really a Mignon, a dear papa, that's what I like him for—to marry his only daughter—well, he would strip himself of everything. The colonel has been accustomed under your restoration to live on half-pay (hiccough), and he will be quite happy living with Dumay, speculating in a small way at le Havre; he will be sure to give the child his three hundred thousand francs. Then we must not forget Dumay, who means to leave his fortune to Modeste. Dumay, you know, is a Breton; his birth gives security to the bargain; he never changes his mind, and his fortune is quite equal to his master's. At the same time, since they listen to me at least as much as to you, though I do not talk so much nor so well, I said to them, 'You are putting too much money into your house; if Vilquin leaves it on your hands, there are two hundred thousand francs that will bring you no return. There will be only a hundred thousand francs left to turn over,

and that, in my opinion, is not enough.' At this moment the colonel and Dumay are talking it over. Take my word for it, Modeste is rich. The people of the town talk nonsense, they are envious. Why, who in the department has such a portion?" said Butscha, holding up his fingers to count. "Two to three hundred thousand francs in hard cash!" said he, folding down his left thumb with the forefinger of his right hand. "That is for one. The freehold of the Villa Mignon," and he doubled down his left forefinger, "for two; Dumay's fortune for three," he added, ticking it off on the middle finger. "Why, little Mother Modeste is a lady with six hundred thousand francs of her own when the two old soldiers shall have gone aloft to take further orders from God A'mighty."

This blunt and artless communication, broken by sips of liqueur, sobered Canalis as much as it seemed to intoxicate Butscha. To the lawyer's clerk, a mere provincial, this fortune was evidently colossal. He let his head drop on the palm of his right hand, and with the elbow majestically resting on the table, he sat blinking and talking to himself: "In twenty years, at the pace the code is taking us, melting down fortunes by the process of subdivision, an heiress with six hundred thousand francs will be as rare as disinterestedness in a money-lender. You may say that Modeste will spend at least twelve thousand francs a year, the interest of her fortune; but she is a very nice girl—very nice—very nice. She is as you may say—a poet must have imagery—she is an ermine as knowing as a monkey."

"And what did you tell me?" cried Canalis in an undertone to la Brière. "That she had six millions?"

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "allow me to remark that I could say nothing. I am bound by an oath, and it is perhaps saying more than I ought to tell you——"

"An oath! and to whom?"

"To Monsieur Mignon."

"Why, Ernest, when you know how indispensable fortune is to me"—Butscha was snoring—"you who know my position and all that I should lose in the Rue de Grenelle by marrying—you would have coolly allowed me to plunge in?" said Canalis, turning pale. "But this is a matter between friends; and our friendship, my boy, is a compact of a far older date than this that the wily Provençal has required of you."

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "I love Modeste too well to——"

"Idiot, take her!" cried the poet. "So break your oath——"

"Do you solemnly promise, on your honor as a man, to forget what I tell you, and to be just the same to me as though I had never confided it to you, come what may?"

"I swear it by the sacred memory of my mother!"

"Well, when I was in Paris, Monsieur Mignon told me that he was very far from having such a colossal fortune as the Mongenods had spoken of. The colonel intends to give his daughter two hundred thousand francs. But then, Melchior, was the father suspicious? or was he sincere? It is no concern of mine to solve that question. If she should condescend to choose me, Modeste, with nothing, should be my wife."

"A blue-stocking, appallingly learned, who has read everything and knows everything—in theory," cried Canalis, in reply to a protesting gesture of la Brière's; "a spoilt child, brought up in luxury during her early years, and weaned from it for the last five. Oh, my poor friend, think, pause, consider——"

"Ode and Code!" said Butscha, rousing himself. "You go in for the Ode, and I for the Code; there is only a C between. Code, from coda, a tail! You have treated me handsomely, and I like you—don't have anything to do with the Code. Listen; a piece of good advice is not a bad return

for your wine and your crème de thé. Old Mignon is cream too, the cream of good fellows. Well, trot out your horse, he is riding out with his daughter; you can speak frankly to him; ask him about her marriage portion; he will give you a plain answer, and you will see to the bottom of things as sure as I am tipsy and you are a great man; but then there must be no mistake, we leave le Havre together, I suppose? I am to be your secretary, since this little chap, who thinks I am drunk and is laughing at me, is going to leave you. Go ahead. March!—and leave him to marry the girl."

Canalis went to dress.

"Not a word; he is rushing on suicide," said Butscha (as cool as Gobenheim) to la Brière, very quietly; and he telegraphed behind Canalis a signal of scorn familiar to the Paris street boy. "Good-by, master," he went on at the top of his voice, "may I go and get forty winks in Madame Amaury's summer-house?"

"Make yourself at home," replied the poet as Butscha staggered out.

The clerk, loudly laughed at by Canalis' three servants, made his way to the summer-house, plunging into flower-beds and baskets with the perverse grace of an insect describing its endless zigzags as it tries to escape through a closed window. He scrambled up into the gazebo, and when the servants had gotten indoors he sat down on a wooden bench and gave himself up to the joys of triumph. He had fooled the superior man; not only had he snatched off his mask, but he had seen him untie the strings, and he laughed as an author laughs at his piece, with a full appreciation of the value of this *vis comica*.

"Men are tops!" cried he; "you have only to find the end of the string that is wound around them. Why, any one could make me faint away by simply saying, 'Mademoiselle Modeste has fallen off her horse and broken her leg.'"

A few minutes later, Modeste, wearing a bewitching habit of dark-green kerseymere, a little hat with a green veil, doeskin gloves, and velvet boots, over which the lace frills of her drawers fell gracefully, had mounted her handsomely saddled pony, and was showing to her father and the Duc d'Hérouville the pretty gift she had just received; she was delighted with it, seeing in it one of those attentions which most flatter a woman.

"Was it you, Monsieur le Duc?" she said, holding out the sparkling end of her whip. "There was a card on it with the words, 'Guess if you can,' and a row of dots. Françoise and Madame Dumay ascribe this charming surprise to Butscha; but my dear Butscha is not rich enough to pay for such fine rubies! And my father, on my saying on Sunday evening that I had no whip, sent for that one from Rouen."

Modeste pointed to a whip in her father's hand with a handle set closely with turquoises, a fashionable novelty then, but now rather common.

"I only wish, mademoiselle—I would give ten years of my life to have the right of offering such a magnificent jewel," replied the Duke politely.

"Ah! then here is the audacious man," cried Modeste, seeing Canalis come up on horseback. "None but a poet can find such exquisite things. Monsieur," she went on to Melchior, "my father will be angry with you; you are justifying those who blame you for your extravagance."

"Hah!" cried Canalis simply, "then that is what took la Brière from le Havre to Paris as fast as he could ride."

"Your secretary took such a liberty!" said Modeste, turning pale, and flinging the whip to Françoise Cochet with a vehemence expressive of the deepest contempt. "Give me back that whip, father!"

"The poor boy is lying on his bed broken with fatigue!" Melchior went on, as they followed the girl, who had gone off

at a gallop. "You are hard, mademoiselle. I have this chance alone of reminding her of my existence,' was what he said."

"And could you esteem a woman who was capable of preserving keepsakes from every comer?" asked Modeste.

Modeste, who was surprised at receiving no reply from Canalis, ascribed his inattention to the sound of the horse's hoofs.

"How you delight in tormenting those who are in love with you!" said the Duke. "Your pride and dignity so entirely belie your vagaries that I am beginning to suspect that you do yourself injustice by deliberately planning your malicious tricks!"

"What! you have just discovered that, Monsieur le Duc?" returned she, with a laugh. "You have exactly as much insight as a husband!"

For about a kilometre they rode on in silence. Modeste was surprised at being no longer aware of the flaming glances of Canalis, whose admiration for the beauties of the landscape seemed rather more than was natural. On the preceding evening Modeste had pointed out to the poet a beautiful effect of color in the sunset over the sea, and, finding him as speechless as a mute, had said—

"Well, do you not see it all?"

"I see nothing but your hand," he had replied.

"Does Monsieur de la Brière know how to ride?" Modeste asked, to pique him.

"He is not a very good horseman, but he goes," replied the poet, as cold as Gobenheim had been before the colonel's return.

As they went along a cross-road, down which Monsieur Mignon turned to go through a pretty valley to a hill overlooking the course of the Seine, Canalis let Modeste and the Duke go forward, slackening his speed so as to bring his horse side by side with the colonel's.

"Monsieur le Comte," said he, "you are a frank soldier, so you will regard my openness as a claim to your esteem. When an offer of marriage, with all the too barbarous, or, if you will, too civilized discussions to which it gives rise, is made through a third person, every one suffers. You and I are both men of perfect discretion, and you, like me, are past the age for surprises, so let us speak as man to man. I will set the example. I am nine-and-twenty, I have no landed estate, I am an ambitious man. That I ardently admire Mademoiselle Modeste you must have seen. Now, in spite of the faults your charming daughter delights in affecting——"

"To say nothing of those she really has," said the colonel, smiling.

"I should be glad, indeed, to make her my wife, and I believe I could make her happy. The whole question of my future life turns on the point of fortune. Every girl who is open to marriage must be loved whatever comes of it; at the same time you are not the man to get rid of your dear Modeste without a portion, and my position would no more allow of my marrying 'for love,' as the phrase is, than of my proposing to a girl without a fortune at least equal to my own. My salary and some sinecures, with what I get from the Academy, and my writings, come to about thirty thousand francs a year, a fine income for a bachelor. If my wife and I between us have sixty thousand francs a year, I could continue to live on much the same footing as at present. Have you a million francs to give Mademoiselle Modeste?"

"Oh! monsieur, we are very far from any agreement," said the colonel jesuitically.

"Well, then, we have said nothing about the matter—only whistled," said Canalis anxiously. "You will be quite satisfied with my conduct, Monsieur le Comte; I shall be one more of the unfortunate men crushed by that charming young lady. Give me your word that you will say nothing of this to anybody, not even to Mademoiselle Modeste; for," he

added, by way of consolation, "some change might occur in my position which would allow of my asking her hand without a settlement."

"I swear it," said the colonel. "You know, monsieur, with what exaggerated language the public, in the provinces as in Paris, talk of fortunes made and lost. Success and failure are alike magnified, and we are never so lucky or so unlucky as report says. In business there is no real security but investment in land when cash transactions are settled. I am awaiting with anxious impatience the reports of my various agents; nothing is as yet concluded—neither the sale of my merchandise and my ship, nor my account with China. I shall not for the next ten months know the amount of my capital. However, in Paris, when talking to Monsieur de la Brière, I guaranteed a settlement on my daughter of two hundred thousand francs in money down. I intend to purchase a landed estate and settle it in tail on my grandchildren, obtaining for them a grant of my titles and coat-of-arms."

After the first words of this speech Canalis had ceased to listen.

The four riders now came out on a wide road and rode abreast up to the plateau, which commands a view of the rich valley of the Seine towards Rouen, while on the other horizon they could still see the line of the sea.

"Butscha was indeed right, God is a great landscape-maker," said Canalis, as he looked down on the panorama, unique among those for which the hills above the Seine are justly famous.

"But it is when out hunting, my dear Baron," said the Duke, "when nature is roused by a voice, by a stir in the silence, that the scenery, as we fly past, seems most really sublime with the rapid change of effect."

"The sun has an inexhaustible palette," said Modeste, gazing at the poet in a sort of bewilderment. On her making a remark as to the absence of mind she observed in Canalis,

he replied that he was "reveling in his own thoughts," an excuse which writers can make in addition to those common to other men.

"Are we really blest when we transfer our life to the centre of the world, and add to it a thousand factitious needs and overwrought vanities?" asked Modeste, as she contemplated the calm and luxuriant champaign which seemed to counsel philosophical quietude.

"Such bucolics, mademoiselle, are always written on tables of gold," said the poet.

"And imagined, perhaps, in a garret," interposed the colonel.

Modeste gave Canalis a piercing look, and saw him flinch; there was a sound of bells in her ears; for a moment everything grew dark before her; then, in a hard, cold tone, she exclaimed—

"Ah! it is Wednesday!"

"It is not with the idea of flattering a merely transient fancy of yours, mademoiselle," said the Duc d'Hérouville solemnly—for this little scene, so tragical to Modeste, had given him time for thought—"but, I assure you, I am so utterly disgusted with the world, the court, and Paris life, that, for my part, with a Duchesse d'Hérouville so full of charm and wit as you are, I could pledge myself to live like a philosopher in my château, doing good to those about me, reclaiming my alluvial flats, bringing up my children——"

"This shall be set down to your credit, Duke," said Modeste, looking steadily at the noble gentleman. "You flatter me," she added, "for you do not think me frivolous, and you believe that I have enough resources in myself to live in solitude. And that perhaps will be my fate," she added, looking at Canalis with a compassionate expression.

"It is the lot of all small fortunes," replied the poet. "Paris requires Babylonian luxury. I sometimes wonder how I have managed to live till now."

"The King is Providence to you and me," said the Duke frankly, "for we both live on his majesty's bounty. If, since the death of Monsieur le Grand, as Cinq-Mars was called, we had not always held his office in our family, we should have had to sell Hérouville to be demolished by the Black Gang. Believe me, mademoiselle, it is to me a terrible humiliation to mix up financial considerations with the thought of marriage——"

The candor of this avowal, which came from the heart, and the sincerity of this regret, touched Modeste.

"In these days," said the poet, "nobody in France, Monsieur le Duc, is rich enough to commit the folly of marrying a woman for her personal merits, her charm, her character, or her beauty——"

The colonel looked at Canalis with a strange expression, after studying his daughter, whose face no longer expressed any astonishment.

"Then for a man of honor," he said, "it is a noble use of riches to devote them to repair the ravages that time has wrought on our old historical families."

"Yes, papa," said the girl gravely.

The colonel asked the Duke and Canalis to dine at the villa, without ceremony, in their riding dress, and set them the example by not changing his for dinner. When, on their return, Modeste went to change her dress, she looked curiously at the trinket that had come from Paris, and that she had so cruelly disdained.

"How exquisitely such work is done nowadays," said she to Françoise Cochet, who was now her maid.

"And that poor young gentleman, mademoiselle, ill of a fever——"

"Who told you so?"

"Monsieur Butscha. He came here just now to bid me say you had no doubt found out that he had kept his word on the day he named."

Modeste went down stairs, dressed with queenly simplicity.

"My dear father," said she, quite audibly, taking the colonel's arm, "will you go and ask after Monsieur de la Brière, and oblige me by taking back his present. You may put it to him that my small fortune, as well as my own taste, prohibits my using such toys as are fit only for a queen or a courtesan. Beside, I can only accept presents from the man I may hope to marry. Beg our excellent young friend to keep the whip till you find yourself rich enough to buy it of him."

"Then my little girl is full of good sense!" replied the colonel, kissing her on the forehead.

Canalis took advantage of a conversation between the Duc d'Hérouville and Madame Mignon to go out on the terrace, where Modeste presently joined him, urged by curiosity, while he believed it was by her desire to become Madame Canalis. Somewhat alarmed at his own audacity in thus executing what a soldier would call "right about face," though, according to the jurisprudence of ambitious souls, every man in his place would have done the same, and just as suddenly, he tried to find some plausible reasons as he saw the ill-starred Modeste come out to him.

"Dear Modeste," said he, in insinuating tones, "as we are on such terms of friendship, will you be offended if I point out to you how painful your replies with regard to Monsieur d'Hérouville must be to a man who loves you, and, above all, to a poet, whose soul is a woman, is all nerves, and suffering from the myriad jealousies of a genuine passion. I should be a poor diplomat indeed if I had not understood that your preliminary flirtations, your elaborate recklessness, were the outcome of a plan to study our characters——"

Modeste raised her head with a quick, intelligent, and pretty movement, of a type that may perhaps be traced to certain animals to which instinct gives wonderful grace.

"And so, thrown back on myself, I was no longer deceived by them. I marveled at your subtle wit, in harmony with your character and your countenance. Be satisfied that I never imagined your assumed duplicity to be anything but an outer wrapper, covering the most adorable candor. No, your intelligence, your learning, have left untainted the exquisite innocence we look for in a wife. You are the very wife for a poet, a diplomatist, a thinker, a man fated to live through hazardous moments, and I admire you as much as I feel attached to you. I entreat you, unless you were merely playing with me yesterday when you accepted the pledges of a man whose vanity will turn to pride if he is chosen by you, whose faults will turn to virtues at your divine touch—I beseech you, do not crush the feeling he has indulged till it is a vice!

"Jealousy in me is a solvent, and you have shown me what its violence is; it is fearful; it eats into everything! Oh! it is not the jealousy of Othello!" said he, in reply to a movement on Modeste's part. "No, no! I myself am in question; I am spoiled in this regard. You know of the one affection to which I owe the only form of happiness I have yet known—and that very incomplete." He shook his head.

"Love is depicted as a child by every nation, because it cannot be conceived of but as having all life before it. Well, this love of mine had its term fixed by nature; it was still-born. The most intuitive motherliness discerned and soothed this aching spot in my heart, for a woman who feels—who sees—that she is dying to the joys of love, has angelic consideration; the Duchess has never given me a pang of that kind. In ten years not a word, not a look, has failed of its mark. I attach more importance than ordinary people do to words, thoughts, and looks. To me a glance is an infinite possession, the slightest doubt is a mortal poison, and acts instantaneously: I cease to love. In my opinion—which is opposed to that of the vulgar, who revel in trembling, hoping, waiting—love ought to dwell in absolute assurance, childlike, infinite.

To me the enchanting purgatory which women delight in inflicting on us with their caprices is an intolerable form of happiness to which I will have nothing to say; to me, love is heaven or hell. Hell I will not have; I feel that I am strong enough to endure the sempiternal blue of paradise. I give myself unreservedly, I will have no secrets, no doubts, no delusions in my future life, and I ask for reciprocity. Perhaps I offend you by doubting you! But, remember, I am speaking only of myself——"

"And a great deal," said Modeste, hurt by all the lancet points of this harangue, in which the Duchesse de Chaulieu was used as a sledge-hammer, "but it can never be too much; I have a habit of admiring you, my dear poet."

"Well, then, can you promise me the dog-like fidelity I offer you? Is it not fine? Is it not what you wish for?"

"But why, my dear poet, do you not look for a wife who is dumb and blind and something of a fool? I am quite prepared to please my husband in all things; but you threaten to deprive a girl of the very happiness you promise her, to snatch it from her at the slightest movement, the slightest word, the slightest look! You cut the bird's wings and want to see it fly! I knew that poets were accused of inconsistency. Oh! quite unjustly," she added, as Canalis protested by a gesture, "for the supposed fault is merely the result of a vulgar misapprehension of the suddenness of their impulses. Still, I had not thought that a man of genius would devise the contradictory conditions of such a game, and then call it life! You insist on impossibilities just to have the pleasure of putting me in the wrong, like those enchanters who in fairy tales set tasks to persecuted damsels whom good fairies rescue——"

"In this case true love will be the fairy," said Canalis, rather drily, seeing that his motive for a separation had been detected by the acute and delicate intelligence which Butscha had put on the scent.

"You, at this moment, my dear poet, are like those parents

who inquire as to a girl's fortune before mentioning what their son's will be. You make difficulties with me, not knowing whether you have any right to do so. Love cannot be based on agreements discussed in cold blood. The poor Duke allows himself to be managed with all the submissiveness of Uncle Toby in Sterne's novel, with this difference, that I am not the widow Wadman, though bereaved at this moment of many illusions concerning poetry. Yes! we hate to believe anything, we girls, that can overthrow our world of fancy! I had been told all this beforehand! Oh! you are trying to quarrel with me in a way unworthy of you! I cannot recognize the Melchior of yesterday."

"Because Melchior has detected in you an ambition you still cherish?——"

Modeste looked at Canalis from head to foot with an imperial glance.

"But I shall some day be an ambassador and a peer as he is——"

"You take me for a vulgar school-girl!" she said, as she went up the steps. But she turned hastily, and added in some confusion, for she felt suffocating—

"That is less insolent than taking me for a fool. The change in your demeanor is due to the nonsense current in le Havre, which Françoise, my maid, has just repeated to me."

"Oh, Modeste, can you believe that?" cried Canalis, with theatrical emphasis. "Then you think that I want to marry you only for your fortune!"

"If I do you this injustice after your edifying remarks on the hills by the Seine, it lies with you to undeceive me, and thenceforth I will be what you would wish me to be," said she, blighting him with her scorn.

"If you think you can catch me in that trap, my lady," said the poet to himself as he followed her, "you fancy me younger than I am. What an ado, to be sure, for a little hussy for whose esteem I care no more than for that of the King of

Borneo. However, by ascribing to me an ignoble motive she justifies my present attitude. Isn't she cunning? La Brière will be saddled, like the little fool that he is; and five years hence we shall laugh at him well, she and I."

The coolness produced by this dispute between Modeste and Canalis was obvious to all eyes that evening. Canalis withdrew early, on the pretext of la Brière's illness, leaving the field free to the master of the horse. At about eleven Butscha, who had come to escort Madame Latournelle home, said in an undertone to Modeste—

"Was I right?"

"Alas, yes!" said she.

"But have you done as we agreed, and left the door ajar so that he may return?"

"My anger was too much for me," replied Modeste. "Such meanness brought the blood to my head, and I told him my mind."

"Well, so much the better! When you have quarreled so that you cannot speak civilly to each other, even then I undertake to make him so devoted and pressing that you yourself will be taken in by him."

"Come, come, Butscha; he is a great poet, a gentleman, and a man of intellect."

"Your father's eight millions will be more than all that."

"Eight millions!" said Modeste.

"My master, who is selling his business, is setting out for Provence to look into Castagnould's investments as your father's agent. The sum-total of the contracts for repurchasing the lands of la Bastie amounts to four millions of francs, and your father has consented to every item. Your settlement is to be two millions, and the colonel allows one for establishing you in Paris with a house and furniture. Calculate."

"Ah, then, I may be Duchesse d'Hérouville," said Modeste, looking at Butscha.

"But for that ridiculous Canalis, you would have kept *his* whip, as sent by me," said Butscha, putting in a word for la Brière.

"Monsieur Butscha, do you really expect me to marry the man you may choose?" retorted Modeste, laughing.

"That worthy young fellow loves as truly as I do; you loved him yourself for a week, and he is a man of genuine heart," replied the clerk.

"And can he compete with a crown appointment, do you think? There are but six—the high almoner, the chancellor, the lord chamberlain, the master of the horse, the high constable, the high admiral. But there are no more lords high constable."

"But in six months, mademoiselle, the people, composed of an infinite number of malignant Butschas, may blow upon all this grandeur. Beside, what does nobility matter in these days? There are not a thousand real noblemen in France. The d'Hérouvilles are descended from an usher of the rod under Robert of Normandy. You will have many a vexation from those two knife-faced old maids. If you are bent on being a duchess—well, you belong to Franche Comté, the pope will have at least as much consideration for you as for the tradespeople, he will sell you a duchy ending in *nia* or *agno*. Do not trifle with your happiness for the sake of a crown appointment."

The reflections indulged in by Canalis during the night were all satisfactory. He could imagine nothing in the world worse than the situation of a married man without a fortune. Still tremulous at the thought of the danger he had been led into by his vanity, which he had pledged, as it were, to Modeste by his desire to triumph over the Duc d'Hérouville, and by his belief in Monsieur Mignon's millions, he began to wonder what the Duchesse de Chaulieu must be thinking of his stay at le Havre, aggravated by five days' cessation from

letter-writing, whereas in Paris they wrote each other four or five notes a week.

"And the poor woman is struggling to get me promoted to be commander of the Legion of Honor and to the place of minister to the Grand Duchy of Baden!" cried he.

Forthwith, with the prompt decisiveness which in poets, as in speculators, is the result of a clear intuition of the future, he sat down and wrote the following letter:

To Madame la Duchesse de Chaulieu.

"My dear Éléonore:—You are, no doubt, astonished at having had no news of me, but my stay here is not merely a matter of health; I also have had to do my duty in some degree to our little friend la Brière. The poor boy has fallen desperately in love with a certain Demoiselle Modeste de la Bastie, a little pale-faced, insignificant thread-paper of a girl, who, by the way, has as a vice a mania for literature, and calls herself poetical to justify the whims, the tantrums, and changes of a pretty bad temper. You know Ernest, he is so easily made a fool of that I would not trust him alone. Mademoiselle de la Bastie set up a strange flirtation with your Melchior; she was very well inclined to be your rival, though she has lean arms and scraggy shoulders, like most young girls, hair more colorless than Madame de Rochefide's, and a very doubtful expression in her little gray eyes. I pulled up this Immodeste's advances pretty short—perhaps rather too roughly; but that is the way of an absorbing passion. What do I care for all the women on earth, who, all put together, are not worth you?

"The people with whom we spend our time, who surround this heiress, are *bourgeois* enough to make one sick. Pity me; I spend my evenings with notaries' clerks, their wives, their cashiers, and a provincial money-lender; wide indeed is the gulf between this and the evenings in the Rue de Grenelle,

The father's trumped-up fortune—he has just come home from China—has secured us the company of that omnipresent suitor the master of the horse, hungrier for millions than ever, since it will cost six or seven, they say, to reclaim and work the much-talked-of alluvion of Hérouville. The King has no idea what a fatal gift he has made to the little Duke. His grace, who does not suspect how small a fortune his hoped-for father-in-law possesses, is jealous only of me. La Brière is making his way with his idol under cover of his friend, who serves as a screen.

"In spite of Ernest's raptures, I, the poet, think of the substantial; and the information I have gathered as to the gentleman's wealth casts a gloomy hue over our secretary's prospects, for his lady-love has sharp enough teeth to eat a hole in any fortune. Now, if my angel would redeem some of our sins, she would try to find out the truth about this matter, by sending for her banker, Mongenod, and cross-questioning him with the skill that distinguishes her. Monsieur Charles Mignon, formerly a colonel in the cavalry of the Imperial Guard, has for seven years been in constant communication with Mongenod's house. They talk here of two hundred thousand francs in settlement, at most; and before making an offer in form for the young lady on Ernest's behalf, I should be glad to have positive data. As soon as the good folks are agreed, I return to Paris. I know a way of bringing the business to a satisfactory conclusion for our lover. All that is needed is to secure permission for Monsieur Mignon's son-in-law to take his title of Count, and no man is more likely to obtain such a grant than Ernest, in view of his services, especially when seconded by us three—you, the Duke, and myself. With his tastes, Ernest, who will undoubtedly rise to be a master of the exchequer, will be perfectly happy living in Paris if he is certain of twenty-five thousand francs a year, a permanent office, and a wife—poor wretch!

"Oh, my dear! how I long to see the Rue de Grenelle again! A fortnight's absence, when it does not kill love, revives the ardor of its early days, and you know, better perhaps than I, all the reasons that make my love eternal. My bones in the tomb will love you still! Indeed, I cannot hold out! If I am compelled to remain ten days longer, I must go to Paris for a few hours.

"Has the Duke got me rope to hang myself? And you, dear life, shall you have to take the Baden waters this season? The cooing of our secret love, as compared with the accents of happy love—always the same, and true to itself for nearly ten years past—has given me a deep contempt of marriage; I had never seen all this so close to my eyes before. Ah! my dear, what is called wrongdoing is a far closer tie between two souls than the law—is it not?"

This idea served as the text for two pages of reminiscences and of aspirations of too private a nature for publication.

On the day before Canalis posted this letter, Butscha, who wrote under the name of Jean Jacmin to his imaginary cousin Philoxène, had sent off his answer twelve hours in advance of the poet's letter. The Duchess, for the last fortnight extremely alarmed and offended by Melchior's silence, had dictated Philoxène's letter to her cousin; and now, after reading the clerk's reply—somewhat too decisive for the vanity of a lady of fifty—had made minute inquiries as to Colonel Mignon's fortune. Finding herself betrayed, deserted for money, Éléonore gave herself up to a paroxysm of rage, hatred, and cold malignancy. Philoxène, knocking at the door of her mistress' luxurious room, on going in, found her with tears in her eyes, and stood amazed at this unprecedented phenomenon, which she had never before seen during fifteen years of service.

"We expiate the happiness of ten years in ten minutes!" exclaimed the Duchess.

"A letter from le Havre, madame."

Éléonore read Canalis' effusion of prose without observing Philoxène's presence, and the maid's surprise was heightened as she saw the Duchess' face recover its serenity as she read the letter. If you hold out to a drowning man a pole as thick as a walking stick, he will regard it as the king's highway to safety; and so the happy Éléonore believed in the poet's good faith as she perused these sheets in which love and business, lies and truth, elbowed each other.

Just now, when the banker had left her, she had sent for her husband to hinder Melchior's promotion if there were time yet; but a generous regret came over her that rose to a sublime impulse.

"Poor boy!" thought she, "he has not the smallest thought of ill. He loves me as he did the first day; he tells me everything. Philoxène!" said she, noticing her head maid loitering about and affecting to arrange the toilet-table.

"Madame la Duchesse?"

"My hand-glass, child."

Éléonore looked at herself, noted the razor-fine lines grooving her forehead, but invisible at a distance; and she sighed, for she believed that in that sigh she was taking leave of love. Then she had a man's thought, above the pettiness of woman —a thought which is sometimes intoxicating; an intoxication which may perhaps account for the clemency of the Semiramis of the North when she made her young and lovely rival Momonoff's wife.

"Since he has not failed me, I will get the millions and the girl for him," thought she, "if this little Mademoiselle Mignon is as plain as he says she is."

Three knocks, delicately rapped out, announced the Duke, for whom his wife herself opened the door.

"Ah! you are better, my dear," cried he, with the assumed gladness that courtiers so well know how to put on, and by which simpletons are taken in.

"My dear Henri," said she, "it is really inconceivable

that you should not by this time have secured Melchior's appointment, after sacrificing yourself for the King during your year's ministry, knowing that it would scarcely endure so long!"

The Duke glanced at Philoxène; and the maid, by an almost imperceptible jerk of the head, showed him the letter from le Havre on the dressing-table. "You would be bored to death in Germany and quarrel with Melchior before your return," said the Duke artlessly.

"Why?"

"Well, would you not always be together?" replied the erewhile ambassador with comical candor.

"Oh! no," said she; "I mean to get him married."

"If d'Hérouville is to be believed, our dear Canalis has not waited for your good offices," replied the Duke, smiling. "Grandlieu yesterday read me some passages of a letter to him from the master of the horse, which was no doubt edited by his aunt to come to your ears; for Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, always on the lookout for a fortune, knows that Grandlieu and I play whist together almost every evening. That good little d'Hérouville invites the Prince de Cadignan to a royal hunt in Normandy, begging him to persuade the King to go, so as to turn the damsel's head when she finds herself the object of such a chivalrous procession. In fact, two words from Charles X. would settle everything. D'Hérouville says the girl is incomparably lovely."

"Henri, let us go to le Havre!" cried the Duchess, interrupting her husband.

"But on what excuse?" said he gravely—a man who had been in the intimate confidence of Louis XVIII.

"I never saw a hunt."

"That would be all very well if the King should be there, but to go so far for a hunt would be ridiculous; and he will not go, I have just spoken to him about it."

"MADAME perhaps would go——"

"That is a better plan," said the Duke; "and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse may help you to get her away from Rosny. Then the King would make no objection to his hounds being taken out. But do not go to le Havre, my dear," said the Duke, in a paternal tone; "it would make you conspicuous. Look here; this, I think, will be a better plan. Gaspard has his Château of Rosembray, on the further side of the forest of Brotonne; why not give him a hint to receive all the party there?"

"Through whom?"

"Why, his wife the Duchess, who attends the holy table with Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, might ask Gaspard to do it if the old maid hinted it to her."

"You are the dearest man!" said Éléonore. "I will write two lines to the old lady, and to Diane; for we must have hunting-suits made. The little hat, now I think of it, makes one look very much younger. Did you win yesterday at the English embassy?"

"Yes," said the Duke; "I wiped out my score."

"And, above all, Henri, set everything aside till Melchior's two promotions are settled."

After writing a few lines to the fair Diane de Maufrigneuse and a note to Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, Éléonore flung this reply like the smack of a horsewhip across Canalis' lies:

To Monsieur le Baron de Canalis.

"My dear Poet:—Mademoiselle de la Bastie is beautiful; Mongenod assures me that her father has eight millions of francs; I had thought of making her your wife, so I am deeply annoyed by your want of confidence in me. If before you started for le Havre, you aimed at getting la Brière married to her, I cannot imagine your not telling me so plainly before you went. And why pass a fortnight without writing a line to a friend so easily alarmed as I am?

"Your letter came a little late; I had already seen the banker. You are a child, Melchior; you try to be cunning with us. That is not right. Even the Duke is amazed at your behavior; he thinks you not quite gentlemanly—which casts a doubt on the virtue of your lady mother.

"Now, I want to see things for myself. I shall, I believe, have the honor of attending MADAME to the hunt arranged by the Duc d'Hérouville for Mademoiselle de la Bastie. I will contrive that you shall be invited to stay at Rosembray, as the hunt will probably take place at the Duc de Verneuil's.

"Believe me, none the less, my dear poet, your friend for life, ÉLÉONORE."

"There, Ernest," said Canalis, tossing this letter, which arrived at breakfast-time, across the table in la Brière's face. "That is the two thousandth love-letter I have received from that woman, and there is not one single 'thou.' The noble Éleonore never compromised herself further than what you find there. Get married, and make haste about it! The worst marriage in the world is more tolerable than the lightest of these halters. Well, I am the veriest Nicodemus that ever dropped from the moon. Modeste has millions; she is lost to me for ever; for no one ever comes back from the poles, where we now are, to the tropics, where we dwelt three days ago! Beside, I have all the more reason to wish for your triumph over the little Duke, because I told the Duchesse de Chaulieu that I came here only for your sake; so now I shall work for you."

"Alas, Melchior, Modeste must need have so superior, so mature a character, and such a noble mind, to resist the spectacle of the court, and all the splendor so skillfully displayed in her honor and glory by the Duke, that I cannot believe in the existence of such perfection; and yet—if she is still the Modeste of her letters, there may be a hope——"

"You are a happy fellow, young Boniface, to see the world

and your lady-love through such green spectacles!" exclaimed Canalis, going out to walk in the garden.

The poet, caught between two falsehoods, could not make up his mind what to do next.

"Play the game by the rules, and you lose!" cried he as he sat in the summer-house. "Every man of sense would undoubtedly have acted as I did four days ago, and have crept out of the trap in which I found myself. For in such a case you don't wait to untie the knots; you break through everything! Come, I must be cold, calm, dignified, hurt. Honor will not allow of any other demeanor. English rigidity is the only way to recover Modeste's respect. After all, if I only get out of the scrape by falling back on my old felicity, my ten years' fidelity will be rewarded. Éléonore will find me a suitable match."

The hunt was destined to be the rallying-point of all the passions brought into play by the colonel's fortune and his daughter's beauty. There was a sort of truce among the contending parties during the few days needed to prepare this solemn act of forestry; the drawing-room in the Villa Mignon had the peaceful appearance of a very united family party. Canalis, intrenched in his part of a much-injured man, made a display of courtesy; he put aside his pretentiousness, gave no more specimens of oratorical talent, and was charming, as clever men are when they shed their affectations. He discussed the money-market with Gobenheim, war with the colonel, Germany with Madame Mignon, and housekeeping with Madame Latournelle, trying to win them over to la Brière. The Duc d'Hérouville frequently left the field free to the two friends, as he was obliged to go to Rosembray to consult the Duc de Verneuil and superintend the execution of the orders issued by the master of the hounds, the Prince de Cadignan.

Meanwhile, the comic element was not lacking. Modeste

found herself between the disparagement Canalis tried to cast on the Duke's gallant attentions and the exaggerated views of the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, who came every evening. Canalis pointed out to Modeste that, far from being the heroine of the day, she would be scarcely noticed. MADAME would be attended by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the daughter-in-law of the master of the hounds, by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, and some other ladies of the court, and among them a mere girl would produce no sensation. Some officers would, no doubt, be invited from the garrison at Rouen, etc. Hélène was never tired of repeating to the girl, whom she looked upon as her sister-in-law, that she would, of course, be presented to MADAME; that the Duc de Verneuil would certainly invite her and her father to stay at Rosembray; that if the colonel had any favor to ask of the King—such as a peerage—this would be a unique opportunity, for they did not despair of getting the King there on the third day; that she would be surprised at the charming reception she would meet with from the handsomest women of the court, the Duchesses de Chaulieu, de Maufrigneuse, de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, etc.; Modeste's prejudices against the Faubourg Saint-Germain would disappear—and so forth, and so forth. It was a most amusing little warfare, with its marches and counter-marches and strategy, which the Dumays, the Latournelles, Gobenheim, and Butscha looked upon and enjoyed, saying among themselves all manner of hard things about the nobility, as they watched their elaborate, cruel, and studied meanness.

The assurances of the d'Hérouville faction were justified by an invitation, in the most flattering terms, from the Duc de Verneuil and the master of the King's hounds to Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie and his daughter to be present at a royal hunt at Rosembray on the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th of November.

La Brière, oppressed by gloomy presentiments, reveled in Modeste's presence in that spirit of concentrated avidity

whose bitter joys are known only to lovers irrevocably and for ever discarded. The flashes of happiness in his inmost self, mingled with melancholy reflections on the same theme, "She is lost to me!" made the poor youth a pathetic spectacle, all the more touching because his countenance and person were in harmony with this depth of feeling. There is nothing more poetical than such a living elegy that has eyes, that walks, and sighs without rhyming.

Finally, the Duc d'Hérouville came to arrange for Modeste's journey. After crossing the Seine, she was to proceed in the Duke's traveling carriage with his aunt and sister. The Duke was perfect in his courtesy; he invited Canalis and la Brière, telling them, as he told Monsieur Mignon, that they would find hunters at their service.

The colonel asked his daughter's three lovers to breakfast on the day of the departure. Then Canalis tried to execute a scheme that had ripened in his mind during the last few days —namely, to reconquer Modeste, and to trick the Duchess, the master of the horse, and la Brière. A graduate in diplomacy could not remain bogged in such a position as that in which he found himself. La Brière, on his part, had made up his mind to bid Modeste an eternal farewell. Thus each suitor, as he foresaw the conclusion of a struggle that had been going on for three weeks, proposed to put in a last word, like a pleader to the judge before sentence is pronounced.

After dinner the day before, the colonel took his daughter by the arm and impressed on her the necessity for coming to a decision.

"Our position with the d'Hérouville family would be intolerable at Rosembray. Do you want to be a duchess?" he asked Modeste.

"No, father," she replied.

"Then do you really love Canalis——?"

"Certainly not, papa; a thousand times, no!" said she, with childish irritability.

The colonel looked at her with a sort of glee.

"Ah! I have not influenced you," cried the kind father. "But I may tell you now that even in Paris I had chosen my son-in-law when, on my impressing on him that I had no fortune, he threw his arms around me, saying that I had lifted a hundredweight from his heart."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Modeste, coloring.

"Of the man of solid virtues and sound morals," said he, mockingly repeating the phrase which, on the day after his return, had scattered Modeste's dreams.

"Oh, I am not thinking of him, papa! Leave me free to refuse the Duke myself; I know him, I know how to soothe him——"

"Then your choice is not made?"

"Not yet. I still have to guess a few syllables in the riddle of my future; but after having had a glimpse of the court, I will tell you my secret at Rosembray."

"You will join the hunt, will you not?" said the colonel to Ernest, whom he saw coming down the path where he was walking with Modeste.

"No, colonel," replied Ernest. "I have come to take leave of you and of mademoiselle. I am going back to Paris."

"You have no curiosity?" said Modeste, interrupting him, and looking at the bashful youth.

"Nothing is needed to keep me," said he, "but the expression of a wish I hardly hope for."

"If that is all, it will give me pleasure, at any rate," said the colonel, as he went forward to meet Canalis, leaving his daughter alone for a moment with the hapless Ernest.

"Mademoiselle," said the young man, looking up at her with the courage of despair; "I have a petition to make."

"To me?"

"Let me depart forgiven! My life can never be happy; I must endure the remorse of having lost my happiness, by my own fault no doubt; but at least——"

"Before we part for ever," replied Modeste, interrupting him *à la* Canalis, "I want to know one thing only; and though you once assumed a disguise, I do not think that you will now be such a coward as to deceive me——"

At the word "coward" Ernest turned pale.

"You are merciless!" he exclaimed.

"Will you be frank with me?"

"You have the right to ask me such a humiliating question," said he, in a voice made husky by the violent beating of his heart.

"Well, then, did you read my letters out to Monsieur de Canalis?"

"No, mademoiselle; and though I gave them to the colonel to read, it was only to justify my love, by showing him how my affection had had birth, and how genuine my efforts had been to cure you of your fancy."

"But what put this ignoble masquerading into your head?" she asked with a kind of impatience.

La Brière related, in all its details, the scene to which Modeste's first letter had given rise, and the challenge which had resulted from Ernest's high opinion in favor of a young lady yearning for glory, as a plant strives for its share of the sunshine.

"Enough," said Modeste, concealing her agitation. "If you have not my heart, monsieur, you have my highest esteem."

This simple speech made la Brière quite dizzy. He felt himself totter, and leaned against a tree, like a man whose senses are failing him. Modeste, who had walked away turned her head and hastily came back.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed, taking him by the hand to save him from falling.

Modeste felt his hand like ice, and saw a face as white as a lily; all the blood had rushed to his heart.

"Forgive me, mademoiselle, I had fancied myself so despised——"

"Well," said she, with haughty scorn, "I did not say that I loved you."

And she again left la Brière, who, notwithstanding this hard speech, thought he was walking on the upper air. The earth felt soft beneath his feet, the trees seemed decked with flowers, the sky was rosy and the air blue, as in the temples of Hymen at the close of a fairy drama that ends happily. In such circumstances women are Janus-like, they see what is going on behind them without turning round; and Modeste saw in her lover's expression the unmistakable symptoms of a love such as Butscha's, which is beyond a doubt the *ne plus ultra* of a woman's desire. And the high value attached by la Brière to her esteem was to Modeste an infinitely sweet experience.

"Mademoiselle," said Canalis, leaving the colonel and coming to meet Modeste, "in spite of the small interest you take in my sentiments, it is a point of honor with me to wipe out a stain from which I have too long suffered. Here is what Madame the Duchess wrote me five days after my arrival here."

He made Modeste read the first few lines of the letter, in which the Duchess said that she had seen Mongenod, and wished that Melchior should marry Modeste; then, having torn off the rest, he placed them in her hand.

"I cannot show you the remainder," said he, putting the paper in his pocket; "but I intrust these few lines to your delicacy, that you may be able to verify the handwriting. The girl who could ascribe to me such ignoble sentiments is quite capable of believing in some collusion, some stratagem. This may prove to you how much I care to convince you that the difference between us was not based on the vilest interest on my part. Ah! Modeste," he went on, with tears in his voice, "your poet—Madame de Chaulieu's poet—has not less poetry in his heart than in his mind. You will see the Duchess. Suspend your judgment of me until then." And he left Modeste quite disconcerted.

"On my word! They are all angels," she muttered to herself. "All too fine for marriage! Only the Duke is a human being."

"Mademoiselle Modeste, this hunt makes me very uneasy," said Butscha, appearing on the scene with a parcel under his arm. "I dreamed that your horse ran away with you, so I have been to Rouen to get you a Spanish snaffle; I have been told that a horse can never get it between his teeth. I implore you to use it; I have shown it to the colonel, who has thanked me more than the thing is worth."

"Poor, dear Butscha!" cried Modeste, touched to tears by this motherly care.

Butscha went skipping off like a man who has suddenly heard of the death of an old uncle leaving a fortune.

"My dear father," said Modeste, on returning to the drawing-room, "I should like very much to have that handsome whip; supposing you were to offer to exchange with Monsieur de la Brière—that whip for your picture by Ostade?"

Modeste cast a side-glance at Ernest while the colonel made this proposal, standing in front of the picture—the only thing he possessed as a memorial of the campaigns he had fought in; he had bought it of a citizen of Ratisbon. And seeing the eagerness with which Ernest rushed from the room, "He will attend the hunt," said she to herself.

Thus, strange to say, Modeste's three lovers all went to Rosembray with hearts full of hope and enraptured by her adorable charms.

Rosembray, an estate recently purchased by the Duc de Verneuil with the money that fell to his share of the thousand million francs voted to legitimize the sale of national property, is remarkable for a château comparable for magnificence with those of Mesnière and Balleroy. This noble and imposing mansion is reached by an immense avenue of ancestral elms

four rows deep, and across a vast courtyard on a slope, like that of Versailles, with a splendid iron screen and two gate lodges, and surrounded by large orange trees in tubs. The façade to this great court displays two stories of nineteen windows in each, between two wings at right angles—tall windows with small panes, set in carved stone arches, and separated by reeded pilasters. A cornice and balustrade screen an Italian roof, whence rise stone chimneys marked by trophies of arms, Rosembray having been built in the reign of Lous XIV. by a farmer-general named Cottin. The front toward the park differs from this, having a centre block of five windows projecting from the main building, with columns and a noble pediment. The Marigny family, to whom the possessions of this Cottin came by marriage with his sole heiress, had a group representing Dawn executed for this pediment by Coysevox. Below it two genii support a scroll, on which this motto is ascribed in honor of the King, instead of the old family device: *Sol nobis benignus.* The great Louis had made a duke of the Marquis de Marigny, one of his most insignificant favorites.

From the top of the semicircular double-flight of steps there is a view over a large lake, as long and wide as the grand canal of Versailles, starting from the bottom of a slope of turf worthy of the most English lawn, its banks dotted with clumps displaying the brightest autumn flowers. Beyond, on each side, a French formal parterre spreads its square beds and paths—pages written in the most majestic style of our time. These two gardens are set in a border of wood and shrubbery, extending the whole length to the extent of thirty acres, and cleared in places in the English fashion under Louis XV. The view from the terrace is shut in beyond by a forest belonging to Rosembray, adjoining two demesnes, one belonging to the nation and one to the crown. It would be hard to find a more beautiful landscape.

Modeste's arrival caused some sensation in the avenue

when the carriage was seen with the royal livery of France, escorted by the master of the horse, the colonel, Canalis, and la Brière, all riding, and preceded by an outrider in the royal livery; behind them came ten servants, among them the colonel's negro and mulatto, and his elegant britska, in which were the two ladies' maids and the luggage. The first carriage was drawn by four horses mounted by tigers, dressed with the spruce perfection insisted on by the master of the horse—often better served in such matters than the King himself.

Modeste, as she drove up and saw this minor Versailles, was dazzled by the magnificence of these great folk; she was suddenly conscious of having to meet these famous duchesses; she dreaded seeming affected, provincial, or parvenu, lost her head completely, and repented of ever having wished for this hunting party.

When the carriage stopped, Modeste happily saw before her an old man in a fair, frizzy wig, with small curls, whose calm, smooth, full face wore a paternal smile and an expression of monastic joviality, to which a half-downcast look lent something like dignity. The Duchess, a woman of deep devotion, the only daughter of a very wealthy president of the supreme court, who had died in 1800, was the mother of four children; very thin and erect, she bore some resemblance to Madame Latournelle, if imagination could be persuaded to embellish the lawyer's wife with the graces of a noble lady-prioress.

"Ah! how do you do, dear Hortense?" said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, embracing the Duchess with all the sympathy that was a tie between these two proud spirits; "allow me to introduce to you and to our dear Duke, Mademoiselle de la Bastie, who is a little angel."

"We have heard so much about you, mademoiselle," said the Duchess, "that we have been most eager to have you here."

"We can but regret our lost time," added the Duc de Verneuil, bowing with gallant admiration.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie," added the master of the horse, taking the colonel by the arm, and leading him up to the Duke and Duchess with a tinge of respect in his tone and manner.

The colonel bowed to the Duchess, the Duke gave him his hand.

"You are very welcome, Monsieur le Comte," said Monsieur de Verneuil. "You are the owner of many treasures," he added, glancing at Modeste.

The Duchess drew Modeste's hand through her arm and led her into a vast drawing-room, where half a score of women were sitting in groups around the fire. The men, led by the Duke, went to walk on the terrace, excepting only Canalis, who went in to pay his respects to the superb Éléonore. She, seated before a tapestry frame, was giving Mademoiselle de Verneuil some hints as to shading.

If Modeste had thrust her finger through with a needle when laying her hand on a cushion, she could not have felt a keener shock than she received from the icy glance, haughty and contemptuous, that the Duchesse de Chaulieu bestowed on her. From the first instant she saw no one but this woman, and guessed whom she was. To know to what a pitch the cruelty can go of those sweet creatures who are exalted by our passion, women must be seen together. Modeste might have disarmed any one but Éléonore by her amazed and involuntary admiration; for if she had not known her rival's age, she would have taken her to be a woman of six-and-thirty; but there were greater surprises in store for her!

The poet found himself flung against the wrath of a great lady. Such anger is the most ruthless Sphinx; the face is beaming, all else is savage. Even kings do not know how to reduce the stronghold of exquisitely cold politeness which a mistress can then hide under steel armor. The lovely

woman's countenance smiles, and at the same time the steel strikes home: the hand is of steel, the arm, the body, all is steel. Canalis tried to clutch this steel, but his fingers slipped over it as his words slipped from her heart. And the gracious face, the gracious phrases, the gracious manner of the Duchess, concealed from every eye the steel of her cold fury —down to twenty-five degrees below zero. The sight of Modeste's supreme beauty, heightened by her journey, the appearance of the girl, as well dressed as Diane de Maufrigneuse, had fired the powder that reflection had stored up in Éléonore's brain.

All the women had gone to the window to see the wonder of the day step out of the carriage, followed by her three lovers.

"Do not let us show that we are so curious," said Madame de Chaulieu, struck to the heart by Diane's exclamation, "She is divine! Where can such a creature have dropped from?"

And they had fled back to the drawing-room, where each one had composed her countenance, while the Duchesse de Chaulieu felt in her heart a thousand vipers all crying at once to be satisfied.

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville remarked in an undertone and with marked meaning to the Duchesse de Verneuil—

"Éléonore is not cordial in her reception of her great Melchior."

"The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse thinks that there is a coolness between them," replied Laure de Verneuil simply. This phrase, so often spoken in the world of fashion, is full of meaning. We feel in it the icy polar blast.

"Why?" asked Modeste of the charming girl who had left the convent of the sacred heart not more than two months since.

"The great man," replied the Duchess, signing to her daughter to be silent, "left her for a fortnight without writ-

ing a word to her, after setting out for le Havre, and saying that he had gone for his health."

Modeste gave a little start which struck Laure, Hélène, and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"And meanwhile," the devout Duchess went on, "she was getting him appointed commander of the Legion of Honor and minister to Baden."

"Oh, it is very wrong of Canalis, for he owes everything to her," said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"Why did Madame de Chaulieu not come to le Havre?" asked Modeste guilelessly of Hélène.

"My child," said the Duchesse de Verneuil, "she would let herself be killed without speaking a word. Look at her. What a queen! With her head on the block she would still smile, like Mary Stuart—indeed, our handsome Éléonore has the same blood in her veins."

"And she did not write to him?" said Modeste.

"Diane told me," replied the Duchess, prompted to further confidences by an elbow nudge from Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, "that she had sent a very cutting answer to the first letter Canalis wrote to her about ten days ago."

This statement made Modeste color with shame for Canalis; she longed not to crush him under her feet, but to revenge herself by a piece of mischief more cruel than a poniard thrust. She looked proudly at Madame de Chaulieu. That glance was gilded with eight millions of francs.

"Monsieur Melchior!" said she.

All the women looked up, first at the Duchess, who was talking to Canalis over the work-frame, then at this young girl, so ill-bred as to disturb two lovers who were settling their quarrel—a thing which is never done in any rank of life.

Diane de Maufrigneuse gave her head a little toss, as much as to say, "The child is in her rights."

Finally, the twelve women smiled at each other, for they were all jealous of a woman of fifty-six who was still hand-

some enough to dip her hand in the common treasury and steal a young woman's share. Melchior glanced at Modeste with feverish irritability, the hasty look of a master to a servant, while the Duchess bent her head with the air of a lioness interrupted at her meal; her eyes, fixed on the canvas, shot flames of fire, almost red-hot, at the poet while she sifted his very soul with her epigrams, for each sentence was a vengeance for a triple injury.

"Monsieur Melchior!" repeated Modeste, in a voice that asserted its right to be heard.

"What is it, mademoiselle?" asked the poet.

He was obliged to rise, but he stood still half-way between the work-frame, which was near the window, and the fireplace, by which Modeste was sitting on the Duchess de Verneuil's sofa. What cruel reflections were forced on the ambitious man when he met Éléonore's steady eye. If he should obey Modeste, all was over for ever between the poet and his protectress. If he paid no heed to the girl, it would be an avowal of his serfdom, he would lose the advantages gained by five-and-twenty days of meanness, and fail in the simplest rules of gentlemanly politeness. The greater the folly, the more imperatively the Duchess insisted on it. Modeste's beauty and fortune, set in the opposite scale to Éléonore's influence and established rights, made this hesitancy between the man and his honor as terrible to watch as the peril of a matadore in the ring. A man never knows such frightful palpitations, as those that seemed to threaten Canalis with an aneurism, anywhere but in front of the gaming-table where his fortune or his ruin is settled within five minutes.

"Mademoiselle d'Hérouville made me get out of the carriage in such a hurry," said Modeste to Canalis, "that I dropped my handkerchief——"

Canalis gave a highly significant shrug.

"And," she went on, in spite of this impatient gesture, "I had, tied to it, the key of a blotting-case, containing an im-

portant fragment of a letter; will you be good enough, Melchior, to ask for it?——"

Between an angel and a tigress, equally irate, Canalis, who had turned pale, hesitated no longer; the tigress seemed the less dangerous. He was on the point of committing himself when la Brière appeared in the doorway, seeming to Canalis something like the archangel Michael descended from heaven.

"Here, Ernest, Mademoiselle de la Bastie wants you," said the poet, hastily retreating to his chair by the work-frame.

Ernest, on his part, went at once to Modeste without bowing to any one else; he saw her alone, received her instructions with visible joy, and ran off with the unconfessed approbation of every woman present.

"What a position for a poet!" said Modeste to Hélène, pointing to the worsted work at which the Duchess was stitching furiously.

"If you speak to her, if you once look at her, all is ended," said Éléonore to Melchior in a low tone, for his middle course had not satisfied her. "And, mind, when I am absent I shall leave other eyes to watch you."

As she spoke, Madame de Chaulieu, a woman of medium height, but rather too fat—as all women are who are still handsome when past fifty—rose, walked toward the group with which Diane de Maufrigneuse was sitting, stepping out with small feet as firm and light as a fawn's. Under her full form the exquisite refinement was conspicuous with which women of that type are gifted, and which gives them that vigorous nervous system that controls and animates the development of the flesh. It was impossible otherwise to account for her light step, which was amazingly dignified. Only those women whose quarterings of nobility date back to Noah, like Éléonore's, know how to be majestic in spite of being as large as a farmer's wife. A philosopher might, perhaps, have pitied Philoxène, while admiring the happy

arrangement of the bodice and the careful details of a morning dress worn with the elegance of a queen and the ease of a girl. Boldly wearing her own abundant and undyed hair, plaited on the top of her head in a coronet like a tower, Éléonore proudly displayed her white neck, her finely shaped bust and shoulders, her dazzling bare arms, ending in hands famous for their beauty. Modeste, like all the Duchess' rivals, saw in her one of those women of whom the others say, "She is past mistress of us all!"

In fact, every one recognized her as one of those few great ladies who are now become so rare in France. Any attempt to describe how majestic was the carriage of her head, how refined and delicate this or that curve of her neck, what harmony there was in her movements, what dignity in her mien, what nobleness in the perfect agreement of every detail with the whole result in the little arts that are a second nature, and make a woman holy and supreme—this would be to try to analyze the sublime. We delight in such poetry, as in that of Paganini, without seeking the means, for the cause is a soul making itself visible.

The Duchess bowed, saluting Hélène and her aunt; then she said to Diane in a clear, bright voice without a trace of emotion—

"Is it not time to dress, Duchess?"

And she swept out of the room, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, each giving her an arm. She was speaking in a low voice as she went away with the old maid, who pressed her to her heart, saying, "You are quite charming!" which was as much as to say, "I am wholly yours in return for the service you have just done us."

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville returned to the drawing-room to play her part as spy, and her first glance told Canalis that the Duchess' last words were no vain threat. The apprentice to diplomacy felt he knew too little of this minor science for so

severe a struggle, and his wit served him at any rate so far as to enable him to assume a straightforward, if not a dignified, attitude. When Ernest returned with Modeste's handkerchief, he took him by the arm and led him out on the lawn.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I am, of all men, not the most unhappy, but the most ridiculous. So I have recourse to you to help me out of the wasps' nest I have gotten into. Modeste is a demon; she saw my embarrassment, she mocks at it; she has just spoken to me of two lines of a letter of Madame de Chaulieu's that I was fool enough to trust her with. If she were to show them, I could never make it up again with Éléonore. So, pray, at once ask Modeste for that paper, and tell her from me that I have no views—no pretensions to her hand; I rely on her delicacy, on her honesty as a lady, to behave to me as though we had never met; I entreat her not to speak to me; I beseech her to vouchsafe to be implacable, though I dare not hope that her spite will move her to a sort of jealous wrath that would serve my ends to a miracle—— Go, I will wait here."

On re-entering the room, Ernest de la Brière saw there a young officer of Havré's company of the Guards, the Vicomte de Sérizy, who had just arrived from Rosny to announce that MADAME was obliged to be present at the opening of the session. This constitutional solemnity was, as is well known, a very important function. Charles X. pronounced a speech in the presence of his whole family, the Dauphiness and MADAME being present in their seats. The choice of the envoy charged with expressing the Princess' regrets was a compliment to Diane. She was supposed to be the immediate object of this fascinating youth's adoration; he was the son of a minister of state, gentleman-in-waiting, and hopeful of high destinies, as being an only son and heir to an immense fortune. The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, however, only accepted the Viscount's attentions in order to throw light on the age of Madame de Sérizy, who, according to the chronicle repeated

behind fans, had won from her the heart of handsome Lucien de Rubempré.

"You, I hope, will do us the pleasure of remaining at Rosembray," said the severe Duchess to the young man.

While keeping her ears open to evil-speaking, the pious lady shut her eyes to the peccadilloes of her guests, who were carefully paired by the Duke; for no one knows what such excellent women will tolerate on the plea of bringing a lost sheep back to the fold by treating it with indulgence.

"We reckoned without the constitutional government," said the Duc d'Hérouville, "and Rosembray loses a great honor, Madame la Duchesse——"

"We shall feel all the more at our ease," observed a tall, lean old man of about seventy-five, dressed in blue cloth, and keeping on his hunting cap by leave of the ladies.

This personage, who was very like the Duc de Bourbon, was no less a man than the Prince de Cadignan, the master of the hounds, and also one of the last of the French Great Lords.

Just as la Brière was about to slip behind the sofa to beg a minute's speech with Modeste, a man of about eight and thirty came in, short, fat, and common looking.

"My son, the Prince de Loudon," said the Duchesse de Verneuil to Modeste, who could not control an expression of amazement on her youthful features as she saw the man who now bore the name which the general of the Vendée Cavalry had made so famous by his daring and by his execution.

The present Duc de Verneuil was the third son taken by his father into exile, and the only survivor of four children.

"Gaspard," said the Duchess, calling her son to her. The Prince obeyed his mother, who went on as she introduced Modeste—

"Mademoiselle de la Bastie, my dear."

The heir presumptive, whose marriage to Desplein's only daughter was a settled thing, bowed to the girl without

seeming struck by her beauty, as his father had been. Modeste thus had an opportunity of comparing the young men of to-day with the old men of the past; for the old Prince de Cadignan had already made her two or three very pretty speeches, proving that he was not less devoted to women than to royalty. The Duc de Rhétoré, Madame de Chaulieu's eldest son, noted for the style which combines impertinence with easy freedom, had, like the Prince de Loudon, treated Modeste almost cavalierly.

The reason of this contrast between the sons and the fathers may, perhaps, lie in the fact that the heirs no longer feel themselves to be objects of importance, as their ancestors were, and excuse themselves from the duties of power, since they no longer have anything but its shadow. The fathers still have the fine manners inherent in their vanished grandeur, like mountains gilded by the sunshine, when all around them is in darkness.

At last Ernest succeeded in saying two words to Modeste, who arose.

"My little beauty!" said the Duchess, as she pulled a bell, thinking that Modeste was going to change her dress, "you shall be taken to your rooms."

Ernest went with Modeste to the foot of the great staircase to make the unhappy Melchior's request, and he tried to touch her by describing the poet's miseries.

"He loves her, you see! He is a captive who thought he could break his chains."

"Love! In a man who calculates everything so closely?" retorted Modeste.

"Mademoiselle, you are at the beginning of your life; you do not know its narrow places. Every sort of inconsistency must be forgiven to a man who places himself under the dominion of a woman older than himself, for he is not responsible. Consider how many sacrifices Canalis has offered to that divinity! how he has sown too much seed to scorn the

harvest; the Duchess represents to him ten years of devotion and of happiness. You had made the poet forget everything, for, unhappily, he has more vanity than pride; he knew not what he was losing till he saw Madame de Chaulieu again. If you knew Canalis, you would help him. He is a mere child, and is spoiling his life for ever. You say he calculates everything, but he calculates very badly, like all poets indeed —creatures of impulse, full of childishness, dazzled, like children, by all that shines, and running after it! He has been fond of horses, of pictures; he has yearned for glory; he sells his pictures to get armor and furniture of the style of the Renaissance and of Louis XV.; he now has a grudge against the government. Admit that his whims are on a grand scale!"

"That will do," said Modeste. "Come," she added, as she saw her father, and beckoned to him to ask him to accompany her, "I will give you that scrap of paper; you can take it to the great man, and assure him of my entire consent to all he wishes, but on one condition, I beg you to give him my best thanks for the pleasure I have enjoyed in seeing him perform for my sole benefit one of the finest pieces of the German theatre. I know now that Goethe's *chef-d'œuvre* is neither 'Faust' nor 'Egmont'"—and, as Ernest looked at the sprightly girl with a puzzled expression—"it is 'Torquato Tasso,'" she added. "Desire Monsieur Canalis to read it once more," she went on, smiling. "I particularly desire that you will repeat this to your friend word for word, for it is not an epigram; it is the justification of his conduct—with this difference, that I hope he will become quite sane, thanks to his Éléonore's folly."

The Duchess' head waiting-maid led Modeste and her father to their rooms, where Françoise Cochet had already arranged everything. Their choice elegance surprised the colonel, and Françoise told him that there were thirty guest-chambers in the same style in the château.

"This is my idea of a country-house," said Modeste.

"The Comte de la Bastie will have such another built for you," replied the colonel.

"Here, monsieur," said Modeste, handing the scrap of paper to Ernest, "go and reassure our friend."

The words "our friend" struck the young man. He looked at Modeste to see if there were seriously some community of sentiment such as she seemed to acknowledge; and the girl, understanding the implied question, added—

"Well, go; your friend is waiting."

La Brière colored violently, and went, in a state of doubt, anxiety, and disturbance more terrible than despair. The approach to happiness is to true lovers very like what the poetry of catholicism has called the straits of paradise, to express a dark, difficult, and narrow way, echoing with the last cries of supreme anguish.

An hour later the distinguished party had all met again in the drawing-room, some playing at whist, others chatting, the women busy with fancy-work, while awaiting the dinner-hour. The master of the hounds led Monsieur Mignon to talk of China, of his campaigns, of the great Provençal families of Portenduère, l'Estorade, and Maucombe; and he remonstrated with him on not asking for employment, assuring him that nothing would be easier than to obtain a post in the Guards with his full rank as colonel.

"A man of your birth and fortune can never class himself with the present opposition," said the Prince with a smile.

This aristocratic society pleased Modeste; and not only that, during her visit she gained a perfection of manner which, but for this revelation, she would never in her life have acquired. If you show a clock to a natural mechanic, it is always enough to reveal to him what mechanism means; the germs within him are at once developed. In the same way, Modeste intuitively assimilated everything that gave distinction to the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chaulieu. To

her each detail was a lesson, where a commonplace woman would have fallen into absurdity by imitating mere manners. A girl of good birth, well informed, with the instincts of Modeste, fell naturally into the right key, and discerned the differences which divide the aristocratic from the middle-class, and provincial life from that of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; she caught the almost imperceptible shades; in short, she recognized the grace of a really fine lady, and did not despair of acquiring it.

In the midst of this Olympus she saw that her father and la Brière were infinitely superior to Canalis. The great poet, abdicating his real and indisputable power, that of the intellect, was nothing but a master of appeals, eager to become a minister, anxious for the collar of the Legion of Honor, and obliged to subserve every constellation. Ernest de la Brière, devoid of ambition, was simply himself; while Melchior, eating humble pie, to use a vulgar phrase, paid court to the Prince de Loudon, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Vicomte de Sérizy, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, as though he had no liberty of speech like Colonel Mignon the Comte de la Bastie, proud of his services and of the Emperor Napoleon's esteem. Modeste saw the continued preoccupation of a wit seeking a point to raise a laugh, a brilliant remark to surprise, or a compliment to flatter the high and mighty personages, on whose level he aimed at keeping himself. In short, here the peacock shed his glittering plumes.

In the course of the evening Modeste went to sit with the master of the horse in a recess of the drawing-room; she took him there to put an end to a struggle she could no longer encourage without lowering herself in her own eyes.

"Monsieur le Duc," she began, "if you knew me well, you would know how deeply I am touched by your attentions. It is precisely the high esteem I have for your character, the friendship inspired by such a nature as yours, which makes me anxious not to inflict the smallest wound on your self-

respect. Before you came to le Havre I loved sincerely, deeply, and for ever a man who is worthy to be loved, and from whom my affection is still a secret; but I may tell you—and in this I am more sincere than most girls—that, if I had not been bound by this voluntary engagement, you would have been my choice, so many and so great are the good qualities I have found in you. A few words dropped by your sister and aunt compel me to say this. If you think it necessary, by to-morrow, before the hunt, my mother shall recall me home under the excuse of serious indisposition. I will not be present without your consent at an entertainment arranged by your kind care, where, if my secret should escape me, I might aggrieve you by an insult to your legitimate pretensions.

"'Why did I come?' you may ask. I might have declined. Be so generous as not to make a crime of an inevitable curiosity. This is not the most delicate part of what I have to communicate. You have firmer friends than you know of in my father and me; and as my fortune was the prime motive in your mind when you came to seek me, without wishing to treat it as a solace to the grief your gallantry requires of you, I may tell you that my father is giving his mind to the matter of the Hérouville lands. His friend Dumay thinks the scheme feasible, and has been feeling his way to the formation of a company. Gobenheim, Dumay, and my father are each ready with fifteen hundred thousand francs, and undertake to collect the remainder by the confidence they will inspire in the minds of capitalists by taking substantial interest in the business.

"Though I may not have the honor of being the Duchesse d'Hérouville, I am almost certain of putting you in the position to choose her one day with perfect freedom in the exalted sphere to which she belongs. Oh, let me finish," said she, at a gesture of the Duke's.

"It is easy to see from my brother's agitation," said Made-

moiselle d'Hérouville to her niece, "that you have gained a sister."

"Monsieur le Duc, I decided on this on the day of our first ride together, when I heard you lamenting your position. This is what I wanted to tell you; on that day my fate was sealed. If you have not won a wife, you have, at any rate, found friends at Ingouville, if, indeed, you will accept us as friends."

This little speech which Modeste had prepared was uttered with such soul-felt charm that tears rose to the Duke's eyes. He seized Modeste's hand and kissed it.

"Remain here for the hunt," said he. "My small merit has accustomed me to such refusals. But while I accept your friendship and the colonel's, allow me to assure myself, by inquiring of the most competent experts, that the reclaiming of the marsh-lands of Hérouville will involve the company of which you speak in no risks, but may bring in some profits, before I accept the liberality of your friends.

"You are a noble girl, and though it breaks my heart to be no more than your friend, I shall glory in the title and prove it to you whenever and wherever I find occasion."

"At any rate, Monsieur le Duc, let us keep the secret to ourselves. My choice will not be announced, unless I am greatly mistaken, till my mother is completely cured; for it is my desire that my plighted husband and I should be blessed with her first glances."

"Ladies," said the Prince de Cadignan at the moment when all were going to bed, "I remember that several of you proposed to follow the hunt with us to-morrow; now I think it my duty to inform you that, if you are bent on being Dianas, you must rise with the dawn. The meet is fixed for half-past eight. I have often in the course of my life seen women display greater courage than men, but only for a few minutes, and you will all need a certain modicum of determination to remain on horseback for a whole day excepting

during the halt called for luncheon—a mere snack, as beseems sportsmen and sportswomen. Are you all still resolved to prove yourselves gallant horsewomen?"

"I, Prince, cannot help myself," said Modeste slily.

"I can answer for myself," said the Duchesse de Chaulieu.

"I know my daughter Diane; she is worthy of her name," replied the Prince. "Well, then, you are all primed for the sport. However, for the sake of Madame and Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who remain at home, I shall do my best to turn the stag to the further end of the pool."

"Do not be uneasy, ladies, the hunters' snack will be served under a splendid marquee," said the Prince de Loudon when the master of the hounds had left the room.

Next morning at daybreak everything promised fine weather. The sky, lightly veiled with gray mist, showed through it here and there in patches of pure blue, and it would be entirely cleared before noon by a northwest breeze, which was already sweeping up some little, fleecy clouds. As they left the château, the master of the hounds, the Prince de Loudon, and the Duc de Rhétoré, who, having no ladies under their care, started first for the meet, saw the chimneys of the house piercing through the veil-mist in white masses against the russet foliage, which the trees in Normandy never lose till quite the end of a fine autumn.

"The ladies are in luck," said the Prince to the Duc de Rhétoré.

"Oh, in spite of their bravado last night, I fancy they will leave us to hunt without them," replied the Duc de Verneuil.

"Yes, if they have not each a gentleman-in-waiting," retorted the Duke.

At this moment these determined sportsmen—for the Prince de Loudon and the Duc de Rhétoré are of the race of Nimrod, and supposed to be the finest shots of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—heard the noise of an altercation, and rode forward at a gallop to the clearing appointed for the meet,

at one of the openings into the forest of Rosembray, and remarkable for a mossy knoll. This was the subject of the quarrel: The Prince de Loudon, bitten by Anglomania, had placed at the Duc de Verneuil's orders the whole of his stable and kennel, in the English style throughout. On one side of the clearing stood a young Englishman, short, fair, insolent-looking and cool, speaking French after a fashion, and dressed with the neatness that characterizes Englishmen even of the lowest class. John Barry had a tunic-coat of scarlet cloth belted round the waist, silver buttons with the arms of Verneuil, white doeskin breeches, top-boots, a striped waist-coat, and a black velvet collar and cap. In his right hand he held a hunting-crop, and in his left, hanging by a silk cord, was a brass horn. This chief huntsman had with him two large thoroughbred hounds, pure fox-hounds with white coats spotted with tan, high on their legs, with keen noses, small heads, and short ears, high up. This man, one of the most famous huntsmen of the country whence the Prince had sent for him at great expense, ruled over fifteen hunters and sixty English-bred dogs, which annually cost the Duc de Verneuil enormous sums; though he cared little for sport, he indulged his son in this truly royal taste. The subordinates, men and horses, stood some little way off and kept perfect silence.

Now on arriving on the ground, John found there three huntsmen with three packs of the King's hounds that had arrived before him in carts; the Prince de Cadignan's three best men, whose figures, both in character and costumes, were a perfect contrast with the representative of insolent Albion. These, the Prince's favorites, all wearing three-cornered cocked hats, very low and flat, beneath which grinned tanned, wrinkled, weather-beaten faces, lighted up as it were by their twinkling eyes, were curiously dry, lean, and sinewy men, burnt up with the passion for sport. Each was provided with a large bugle hung about with green worsted cord that left nothing visible but the bell of the trumpet; they kept their

dogs in order by the eye and voice. The noble brutes, all splashed with liver-color and black, each with his individual expression, as distinct as Napoleon's soldiers, formed a posse of subjects more faithful than those whom the King was at that moment addressing—their eyes lighting up at the slightest sound with a spark that glittered like a diamond—this one from Poitou, short in the loins, broad-shouldered, low on the ground, long-eared; that one an English dog, white, slim in the belly, with short ears, and made for coursing; all the young hounds eager to give tongue, while their elders, seamed with scars, lay quiet, at full length, their heads resting on their fore-paws, and listening on the ground like wild men of the woods.

On seeing the English contingent the dogs and the King's men looked at each other, asking without saying a word—

"Are we not to hunt by ourselves? Is not this a slur on his majesty's royal hunt?"

After beginning with some banter, the squabble had grown warm between Monsieur Jacquin la Roulie, the old chief huntsman of the French force, and John Barry, the young Briton.

While still at some distance the princes guessed what had given rise to the quarrel, and the master of the hounds, putting spurs to his horse, ended the matter by asking in a commanding tone—

"Who beat the wood?"

"I, monseigneur," said the Englishman.

"Very good," said the Prince de Cadignan, listening to John Barry's report.

Men and dogs, all alike, were respectful in the presence of the master of the hounds, as though all alike recognized his supreme authority. The Prince planned the order of the day; for a hunt is like a battle, and Charles X.'s master of the hounds was a Napoleon of the forest. Thanks to the admirable discipline carried out by his orders in stable and

kennel, he could give his whole mind to strategy and the science of the chase. He assigned a place in the proceedings of the day to the Prince de Loudon's hounds and men, reserving them, like a cavalry corps, to turn the stag back on the pool, in the event of the King's packs succeeding, as he hoped, in forcing the game into the royal demesne lying in the distance in front of the château. He gratified the self-respect of his own old retainers by giving them the hardest work, and that of the Englishman, whom he employed in his own special line, by giving him an opportunity of displaying the strength of limb of his dogs and horses. Thus the two methods would work against each other, and do wonders to excite reciprocal emulation.

"Are we to wait any longer, monsiegneur?" asked la Roulie respectfully.

"I understand you, old friend," replied the Prince. "It is late, but——"

"Here come the ladies, for Jupiter scents the fetish odors," said the second huntsman, observing the nose of his favorite hound.

"Fetish?" repeated the Prince de Loudon with a smile.

"He probably means fetid," said the Duc de Rhétoré.

"That is it, no doubt, for everything that does not smell of the kennel is poisonous, according to Monsieur Laravine," replied the Prince.

In point of fact, the three gentlemen could see in the distance a party of sixteen riders, and fluttering at their head the green veils of four ladies. Modeste, with her father, the Duc d'Hérouville, and little la Brière, was in front, with the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse attended by the Vicomte de Sérizy. Then came the Duchesse de Chaulieu with Canalis at her side, she smiling at him with no sign of rancor. On reaching the clearing, where the huntsmen, dressed in red, holding their hunting horns and surrounded by dogs and beaters, formed a group worthy of the brush of Van der Meulen, the Duchesse

de Chaulieu, an admirable figure on horseback, though somewhat too stout, drew up close to Modeste, feeling it beneath her dignity to sulk with the young person to whom, the day before, she had not spoken a word.

Just at the moment when the master of the hounds had ended his compliments on such fabulous punctuality, Éléonore condescended to remark the splendid whip-handle that sparkled in Modeste's little hand, and she very graciously begged to examine it.

"It is the finest thing in its way that I have ever seen," said she, showing the gem to Diane de Maufrigneuse; "but, indeed, it is in harmony with the owner's whole person," she added, as she returned it to Modeste.

"You will confess, madame," replied Mademoiselle de la Bastie, with a mischievous but tender glance at la Brière, in which he could read an avowal, "that it is a very strange gift as coming from a future husband——"

"Indeed," exclaimed Madame de Maufrigneuse, "I should regard it as a recognition of my rights, remembering always Louis XIV."

There were tears in la Brière's eyes; he dropped his bridle, and was ready to fall; but another look from Modeste recalled him to himself by warning him not to betray his supreme happiness.

The cavalcade set out.

The Duc d'Hérouville said in a low voice to la Brière: "I hope, monsieur, that you will make your wife happy, and if I can in any way serve you, command me; for I should be delighted to contribute to the happiness of two such charming people."

This great day, when such important interests of hearts and fortunes were definitely settled, to the master of the hounds offered no other problem but that as to whether the stag would cross the pool, and be killed on the grass-slope within sight of the château; for huntsmen of such experience are like chess

players, who can foresee a checkmate many moves ahead. The fortunate old gentleman succeeded to the height of his wishes; the run was splendid, and the ladies relieved him of their presence on the next day but one, which proved to be rainy.

The Duc de Verneuil's guests remained three days at Rosembray. On the last morning the "Gazette de France" contained the announcement that M. le Baron de Canalis was appointed to the rank of commander of the Legion of Honor and the post of minister at Carlsruhe.

When early in the month of December the Comtesse de la Bastie was operated on by Desplein, and could at last see Ernest de la Brière, she pressed Modeste's hand and said in her ear—

"I should have chosen him."

Toward the end of February all the documents relating to the acquisition of the estates were signed by the worthy and excellent Latournelle, Monsieur Mignon's attorney in Provence. At this time the family of la Bastie obtained from his majesty the distinguished honor of his signature to the marriage contract and the transmission of the title and the arms of la Bastie to Ernest de la Brière, who was authorized to call himself the Vicomte de la Bastie-La Brière. The estate of la Bastie, reconstituted to yield more than a hundred thousand francs a year, was entailed by letters patent registered by the court in the month of April.

La Brière's witnesses were Canalis and the minister, whose private secretary he had been for five years. Those who signed for the bride were the Duc d'Hérouville and Desplein, for whom the Mignons cherished enduring gratitude, after giving him magnificent proofs of it.

By-and-by, perhaps, in this long record of our manners, we may meet again with Monsieur and Madame de la Brière-La Bastie, and connoisseurs will then perceive how easy and

sweet a tie is marriage when the wife is well informed and clever; for Modeste, who kept her promise of avoiding all the absurdities of pedantry, is still the pride and delight of her husband, of her family, and of her circle of friends.

PARIS, *March-July*, 1844.

HONORINE.

To Monsieur Achille Devéria.

An affectionate remembrance from the Author.

If the French have as great an aversion for traveling as the English have a propensity for it, both English and French have perhaps sufficient reasons. Something better than England is everywhere to be found; whereas, it is excessively difficult to find the charms of France outside France. Other countries can show admirable scenery, and they frequently offer greater comfort than that of France, which makes but slow progress in that particular. They sometimes display a bewildering magnificence, grandeur, and luxury; they lack neither grace nor noble manners; but the life of the brain, the talent for conversation, the "Attic salt" so familiar at Paris, the prompt apprehension of what one is thinking, but does not say, the spirit of the unspoken, which is half the French language, is nowhere else to be met with. Hence a Frenchman, whose raillery, as it is, finds so little comprehension, would wither in a foreign land like an uprooted tree. Emigration is counter to the instincts of the French nation. Many Frenchmen, of the kind here in question, have owned to pleasure at seeing the custom-house officers of their native land, which may seem the most daring hyperbole of patriotism.

This little preamble is intended to recall to such Frenchmen as have traveled the extreme pleasure they have felt on occasionally finding their native land, like an oasis, in the drawing-room of some diplomatist: a pleasure hard to be understood by those who have never left the asphalt of the

Boulevard des Italiens, and to whom the quais of the left bank of the Seine are not really Paris. To find Paris again! Do you know what that means, O Parisians? It is to find—not indeed the cookery of the *Rocher de Cancale* as Borel elaborates it for those who can appreciate it, for that exists only in the Rue Montorgueil—but a meal which reminds you of it! It is to find the wines of France, which out of France are to be regarded as myths, and as rare as the woman of whom I write! It is to find—not the most fashionable pleasantry, for it loses its aroma between Paris and the frontier—but the witty understanding, the critical atmosphere in which the French live, from the poet down to the artisan, from the duchess to the boy in the street.

In 1836, when the Sardinian court was residing at Genoa, two Parisians, more or less famous, could fancy themselves still in Paris when they found themselves in a palazzo, taken by the French consul-general, on the hill forming the last fold of the Apennines between the gate of San Tomaso and the well-known lighthouse, which is to be seen in all the keepsake views of Genoa. This palazzo is one of the magnificent villas on which Genoese nobles were wont to spend millions at the time when the aristocratic republic was a power.

If the early night is beautiful anywhere, it surely is at Genoa, after it has rained as it can rain there, in torrents, all the morning; when the clearness of the sea vies with that of the sky; when silence reigns on the quay and in the groves of the villa, and over the marble heads with yawning jaws, from which water mysteriously flows; when the stars are beaming; when the waves of the Mediterranean lap one after another like the avowal of a woman, from whom you drag it word by word. It must be confessed that the moment when the perfumed air brings fragrance to the lungs and to our day-dreams; when voluptuousness, made visible and ambient as the air, holds you in your easy-chair; when, a spoon in your

hand, you sip an ice or a sherbet, the town at your feet and fair women opposite—such Boccaccio hours can be known only in Italy and on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Imagine to yourself, round the table, the Marquis di Negro, a knight hospitaler to all men of talent on their travels, and the Marquis Damaso Pareto, two Frenchmen disguised as Genoese, a consul-general with a wife as beautiful as a Madonna, and two silent children—silent because sleep has fallen on them—the French ambassador and his wife, a secretary to the embassy who believes himself to be crushed and mischievous; finally, two Parisians, who have come to take leave of the consul's wife at a splendid dinner, and you will have the picture presented by the terrace of the villa about the middle of May—a picture in which the predominant figure was that of a celebrated woman, on whom all eyes centred now and again, the heroine of this improvised festival.

One of the two Frenchmen was the famous landscape painter, Léon de Lora; the other a well-known critic, Claude Vignon. They had both come with this lady, one of the glories of the fair sex, Mademoiselle des Touches, known in the literary world by the name of Camille Maupin.

Mademoiselle des Touches had been to Florence on business. With the charming kindness of which she is prodigal, she had brought with her Léon de Lora to show him Italy, and had gone on as far as Rome that he might see the Campagna. She had come by the Simplon, and was returning by the Cornice road to Marseilles. She had stopped at Genoa, again on the landscape painter's account. The consul-general had, of course, wished to do the honors of Genoa, before the arrival of the court, to a woman whose wealth, name, and position recommend her no less than her talents. Camille Maupin, who knew her Genoa down to its smallest chapels, had left her landscape painter to the care of the diplomatist and the Genoese marquises, and was miserly of her minutes. Though the ambassador was a distinguished man of letters, the cele-

brated lady had refused to yield to his advances, dreading what the English call an exhibition; but she had drawn in the claws of her refusals when it was proposed that they should spend a farewell day at the consul's villa. Léon de Lora had told Camille that her presence at the villa was the only return he could make to the ambassador and his wife, the two Genoese noblemen, the consul and his wife. So Mademoiselle des Touches had sacrificed one of those days of perfect freedom, which are not always to be had in Paris by those on whom the world has its eye.

Now, the meeting being accounted for, it is easy to understand that etiquette had been banished, as well as a great many women even of the highest rank, who were curious to know whether Camille Maupin's manly talent impaired her grace as a pretty woman, and to see, in a word, whether the trousers showed below her petticoats. After dinner till nine o'clock, when a collation was served, though the conversation had been gay and grave by turns, and constantly enlivened by Léon de Lora's sallies—for he is considered the most roguish wit of Paris to-day—and by the good taste which will surprise no one after the list of guests, literature had scarcely been mentioned. However, the butterfly flittings of this French tilting match were certain to come to it, were it only to flutter over this essentially French subject. But before coming to the turn in the conversation which led the consul-general to speak, it will not be out of place to give some account of him and his family.

This diplomatist, a man of four-and-thirty, who had been married about seven years, was a living portrait of Lord Byron. The familiarity of that face makes a description of the consul's unnecessary. It may, however, be noted that there was no affectation in his dreamy expression. Lord Byron was a poet, and the consul was poetical; women know and recognize the difference, which explains without justifying some of their attachments. His handsome face, thrown into relief

by a delightful nature, had captivated a Genoese heiress. A Genoese heiress! the expression might raise a smile at Genoa, where, in consequence of the inability of daughters to inherit, a woman is rarely rich; but Onorina Pedrotti, the only child of a banker without heirs male, was an exception. Notwithstanding all the flattering advances prompted by a spontaneous passion, the consul-general had not seemed to wish to marry. Nevertheless, after living in the town for two years, and after certain steps taken by the ambassador during his visits to the Genoese court, the marriage was decided on. The young man withdrew his former refusal, less on account of the touching affection of Onorina Pedrotti than by reason of an unknown incident, one of those crises of private life which are so instantly buried under the daily tide of interests that, at a subsequent date, the most natural actions seem inexplicable.

This involution of causes sometimes affects the most serious events of history. This, at any rate, was the opinion of the town of Genoa, where, to some women, the extreme reserve, the melancholy of the French consul could be explained only by the word passion. It may be remarked, in passing, that women never complain of being the victims of a preference; they are very ready to immolate themselves for the common weal. Onorina Pedrotti, who might have hated the consul if she had been altogether scorned, loved her *sposo* no less, and perhaps more, when she knew that he had loved. Women allow precedence in love affairs. All is well if other women are in question.

A man is not a diplomatist with impunity: the *sposo* was as secret as the grave—so secret that the merchants of Genoa chose to regard the young consul's attitude as premeditated, and the heiress might perhaps have slipped through his fingers if he had not played his part of a love-sick *malade imaginaire*. If it was real, the women thought it too degrading to be believed.

Pedrotti's daughter gave him her love as a consolation;

she lulled these unknown griefs in a cradle of tenderness and Italian caresses.

The Signor Pedrotti had indeed no reason to complain of the choice to which he was driven by his beloved child. Powerful protectors in Paris watched over the young diplomatist's fortunes. In accordance with a promise made by the ambassador to the consul-general's father-in-law, the young man was created Baron and commander of the Legion of Honor. Signor Pedrotti himself was made a Count by the King of Sardinia. Onorina's dower was a million of francs. As to the fortune of the Casa Pedrotti, estimated at two millions, made in the corn trade, the young couple came into it within six months of their marriage, for the first and last Count Pedrotti died in January, 1831.

Onorina Pedrotti is one of those beautiful Genoese women who, when they are beautiful, are the most magnificent creatures in Italy. Michael Angelo took his models in Genoa for the tomb of Giuliano. Hence the fullness and singular placing of the breast in the figures of Day and Night, which so many critics have thought exaggerated, but which is peculiar to the women of Liguria. A Genoese beauty is no longer to be found excepting under the *mezzaro*, as at Venice it is met with only under the *fazzioli*. This phenomenon is observed among all fallen nations. The noble type survives only among the populace, as after the burning of a town coins are found hidden in the ashes. And Onorina, an exception as regards her fortune, is no less an exceptional patrician beauty. Recall to mind the figure of Night which Michael Angelo has placed at the feet of the "Pensieroso," dress her in modern garb, twist that long hair around the magnificent head, a little dark in complexion, set a spark of fire in those dreamy eyes, throw a scarf about the massive bosom, see the long dress, white, embroidered with flowers, imagine the statue sitting upright, with her arms folded like those of Mademoiselle Georges, and you will see before you the consul's wife, with

a boy of six, as handsome as a mother's desire, and a little girl of four on her knees, as beautiful as the type of childhood so laboriously sought out by the sculptor David to grace a tomb.

This beautiful family was the object of Camille's secret study. It struck Mademoiselle des Touches that the consul looked rather too absent-minded for a perfectly happy man.

Although, throughout the day, the husband and wife had offered her the pleasing spectacle of complete happiness, Camille wondered why one of the most superior men she had ever met, and whom she had seen, too, in Paris drawing-rooms, remained as consul-general at Genoa when he possessed a fortune of a hundred-odd thousand francs a year. But, at the same time, she had discerned, by many of the little nothings which women perceive with the intelligence of the Arab sage in "Zadig," that the husband was faithfully devoted. These two handsome creatures would no doubt love each other without a misunderstanding till the end of their days. So Camille said to herself alternately, "What is wrong? Nothing is wrong," following the misleading symptoms of the consul's demeanor; and he, it may be said, had the absolute calmness of Englishmen, of savages, of Orientals, and of consummate diplomatists.

In discussing literature, they spoke of the perennial stock-in-trade of the republic of letters—woman's sin. And they presently found themselves confronted by two opinions: When a woman sins, is the man or the woman to blame? The three women present—the ambassadress, the consul's wife, and Mademoiselle des Touches, women, of course, of blameless reputations—were without pity for the woman. The men tried to convince these three fair flowers of their sex that some virtues might remain in a woman after she had fallen.

"How long are we going to play at hide-and-seek in this way?" asked Léon de Lora.

"Dear life, go and put your children to bed, and send me by Gina the little black pocket-book that lies on my boule cabinet," said the consul to his wife.

She arose without a reply, which showed that she loved her husband very truly, for she already knew French enough to understand that her husband was getting rid of her.

"I will tell you a story in which I played a part, and after that we can discuss it, for it seems to me childish to practice with the scalpel on an imaginary body. Begin by dissecting a corpse."

Every one prepared to listen, with all the greater readiness because they had all talked enough, and this is the moment to be chosen for telling a story. This, then, is the consul-general's tale:

"When I was twenty-two, and had taken my degree in law, my old uncle, the Abbé Loraux, then seventy-two years old, felt it necessary to provide me with a protector and to start me in some career. This excellent man, if not indeed a saint, regarded each year of his life as a fresh gift from God. I need not tell you that the father confessor of a royal highness had no difficulty in finding a place for a young man brought up by himself, his sister's only child. So one day, toward the end of the year 1824, this venerable old man, who for five years had been curé of the white friars at Paris, came up to the room I had in his house, and said in his mild, gentle way—

"'Get yourself dressed, my dear boy; I am going to introduce you to some one who is willing to engage you as secretary. If I am not mistaken, he may fill my place in the event of God's taking me to Himself. I shall have finished mass by nine o'clock; you have three-quarters of an hour before you. Be ready.'

"'What, uncle! must I say good-by to this room, where for four years I have been so happy?'

"'I have no fortune to leave you,' said he.

"'Have you not the reputation of your name to leave me, the memory of your good works——?'

"'We need say nothing of that inheritance,' he replied, smiling. 'You do not yet know enough of the world to be aware that a legacy of that kind is hardly likely to be paid, whereas by taking you this morning to M. le Comte'—Allow me," said the consul, interrupting himself, "to speak of my protector by his Christian name only, and to call him Comte Octave.—'By taking you this morning to M. le Comte Octave, I hope to secure you his patronage, which, if you are so fortunate as to please that virtuous statesman—as I make no doubt you can—will be worth, at least, as much as the fortune I might have accumulated for you, if my brother-in-law's ruin and my sister's death had not fallen on me like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.'

"'Are you the Count's director?'

"'If I were, could I place you with him? What priest could be capable of taking advantage of the secrets which he learns at the tribunal of repentance? No; you owe this position to his highness the keeper of the seals. My dear Maurice, you will be as much at home there as in your father's house. The Count will give you a salary of two thousand four hundred francs, rooms in his house, and an allowance of twelve hundred francs in lieu of feeding you. He will not admit you to his table, nor give you a separate table, for fear of leaving you to the care of servants. I did not accept the offer when it was made to me till I was perfectly certain that Comte Octave's secretary was never to be a mere upper servant. You will have an immense amount of work, for the Count is a great worker; but when you leave him you will be qualified to fill the highest posts. I need not warn you to be discreet; that is the first virtue of any man who hopes to hold public appointments.'

"You may conceive of my curiosity. Comte Octave, at that time, held one of the highest legal appointments; he

was in the confidence of Madame the Dauphiness, who had just got him made a state minister; he led such a life as the Comte de Sérizy, whom you all know, I think; but even more quietly, for his house was in the Marais, Rue Payenne, and he hardly ever entertained. His private life escaped public comment by its hermit-like simplicity and by constant hard work.

"Let me describe my position to you in a few words. Having found in the solemn headmaster of the Collége Saint-Louis a tutor to whom my uncle delegated his authority, at the age of eighteen I had gone through all the classes; I left school as innocent as a seminarist, full of faith, on quitting Saint-Sulpice. My mother, on her death-bed, had made my uncle promise that I should not become a priest, but I was as pious as though I had to take orders. On leaving college, the Abbé Loraux took me into his house and made me study law. During the four years of study requisite for passing all the examinations, I worked hard, but chiefly at things outside the arid fields of jurisprudence. Weaned from literature as I had been at college, where I lived in the headmaster's house, I had a thirst to quench. As soon as I had read a few modern masterpieces, the works of all the preceding ages were greedily swallowed. I became crazy about the theatre, and for a long time I went every night to the play, though my uncle gave me only a hundred francs a month. This parsimony, to which the good old man was compelled by his regard for the poor, had the effect of keeping a young man's desires within reasonable limits.

"When I went to live with Comte Octave I was not indeed an innocent, but I thought of my rare escapades as crimes. My uncle was so truly angelic, and I was so much afraid of grieving him, that in all those four years I had never spent a night out. The good man would wait till I came in to go to bed. This almost-maternal care had more power to keep me within bounds than the sermons and reproaches with which the life of a young man is diversified in a puritanical home. I was a

stranger to the various circles which make up the world of Paris society; I only knew some women of the better sort, and none of the inferior class but those I saw as I walked about, or in the boxes at the play, and then only from the depths of the pit where I sat. If, at that period, any one had said to me, 'You will see Canalis or Camille Maupin,' I should have felt hot coals on my head and in my bowels. Famous people were to me as gods, who neither spoke, nor walked, nor ate like other mortals.

"How many tales of the 'Thousand-and-one Nights' are comprehended in the ripening of a youth! How many wonderful lamps must we have rubbed before we understand that the true wonderful lamp is either luck, or work, or genius! In some men this dream of the aroused spirit is but brief; mine has lasted until now! In those days I always went to sleep as Grand Duke of Tuscany—as a millionaire—as beloved by a princess—or famous! So to enter the service of Comte Octave, and have a hundred louis a year, was entering on independent life. I had glimpses of some chance of getting into society, and seeking for what my heart desired most, a protectress, who would rescue me from the paths of danger, which a young man of twenty-two can hardly help treading, however prudent and well brought up he may be. I began to be afraid of myself.

"The persistent study of other people's rights into which I had plunged was not always enough to repress painful imaginings. Yes, sometimes in fancy I threw myself into theatrical life; I thought I could be a great actor; I dreamed of endless triumphs and loves, knowing nothing of the disillusion hidden behind the curtain, as everywhere else—for every stage has its reverse behind the scenes. I have gone out sometimes, my heart boiling, carried away by an impulse to rush hunting through Paris, to attach myself to some handsome woman I might meet, to follow her to her door, watch her, write to her, throw myself on her mercy, and conquer her by sheer

force of passion. My poor uncle, a heart consumed by charity, a child of seventy years, as clear-sighted as God, as guileless as a man of genius, no doubt read the tumult of my soul; for when he felt the tether by which he held me strained too tightly and ready to break, he would never fail to say, 'Here, Maurice, you too are poor! Here are twenty francs; go and amuse yourself, you are not a priest!' And if you could then have seen the dancing light that gilded his gray eyes, the smile that relaxed his fine lips, puckering the corners of his mouth, the adorable expression of that august face, whose native ugliness was redeemed by the spirit of an apostle, you would understand the feeling which made me answer the curé of white friars only with a kiss, as if he had been my mother.

"'In Comte Octave you will find not a master, but a friend,' said my uncle on the way to the Rue Payenne. 'But he is distrustful, or, to be more exact, he is cautious. The statesman's friendship can be won only with time; for in spite of his deep insight and his habit of gauging men, he was deceived by the man you are succeeding, and nearly became a victim to his abuse of confidence. This is enough to guide you in your behavior to him.'

"When we knocked at the enormous outer door of a house as large as the Hôtel Carnavalet, with a courtyard in front and a garden behind, the sound rang as in a desert. While my uncle inquired of an old porter in livery if the Count were at home, I cast my eyes, seeing everything at once, over the courtyard where the cobblestones were hidden in grass, the blackened walls where little gardens were flourishing above the decorations of the elegant architecture, and on the roof, as high as that of the Tuileries. The balustrade of the upper balconies was eaten away. Through a magnificent colonnade I could see a second court on one side, where were the offices; the door was rotting. An old coachman was there cleaning an old carriage. The indifferent air of this servant allowed

me to assume that the handsome stables, where of old so many horses had whinnied, now sheltered two at most. The handsome façade of the house seemed to me gloomy, like that of a mansion belonging to the state or the crown, and given up to some public office. A bell rang as we walked across, my uncle and I, from the porter's lodge—'Enquire of the Porter' was still written over the door—toward the outside steps, where a footman came out in a livery like that of Labranche at the Théâtre Français in the old stock plays. A visitor was so rare that the servant was putting his coat on when he opened a door glazed with small panes, on each side of which the smoke of a lamp had traced patterns on the wall.

"A hall so magnificent as to be worthy of Versailles ended in a staircase such as will never again be built in France, taking up as much space as the whole of a modern house. As we went up the marble steps, as cold as tombstones and wide enough for eight persons to walk abreast, our tread echoed under sonorous vaulting. The banister charmed the eye by its miraculous workmanship—goldsmith's work in iron—wrought by the fancy of an artist of the time of Henri III. Chilled as by an icy mantle that fell on our shoulders, we went through anterooms, drawing-rooms, opening one out of the other, with carpetless parquet floors, and furnished with such splendid antiquities as from thence would find their way to the curiosity dealers. At last we reached a large study in a cross wing, with all the windows looking into an immense garden.

"'Monsieur le Curé of the White Friars and his nephew, Monsieur de L'Hostal,' said Labranche, to whose care the other theatrical servant had consigned us in the first antechamber.

"Comte Octave, dressed in long trousers and a gray flannel morning-coat, rose from his seat by a huge writing-table, came to the fireplace and signed to me to sit down, while he went forward to take my uncle's hands, which he pressed.

"'Though I am in the parish of Saint-Paul,' said he, 'I could scarcely have failed to hear of the curé of the white friars, and I am happy to make his acquaintance.'

"'Your excellency is most kind,' replied my uncle. 'I have brought to you my only remaining relation. While I believe that I am offering a good gift to your excellency, I hope at the same time to give my nephew a second father.'

"'As to that, I can only reply, Monsieur l'Abbe, when we shall have tried each other,' said Comte Octave. 'Your name?' he added to me.

"'Maurice.'

"'He has taken his doctor's degree in law,' my uncle observed.

"'Very good, very good!' said the Count, looking at me from head to foot. 'Monsieur l'Abbé, I hope that for your nephew's sake in the first instance, and then for mine, you will do me the honor of dining here every Monday. That will be our family dinner, our family party.'

"My uncle and the Count then began to talk of religion from the political point of view, of charitable institutes, the repression of crime, so I could at my leisure study the man on whom my fate would henceforth depend. The Count was of middle height; it was impossible to judge of his build on account of his dress, but he seemed to me to be lean and spare. His face was harsh and hollow; the features were refined. His mouth, which was rather large, expressed both irony and kindliness. His forehead, perhaps too spacious, was as intimidating as that of a madman, all the more so from the contrast of the lower part of the face, which ended squarely in a short chin very near the lower lip. Small eyes, of turquoise blue, were as keen and bright as those of the Prince de Talleyrand—which I admired at a later time—and endowed, like the Prince's, with a faculty of becoming expressionless to the verge of gloom; and they added to the singularity of a face that was not pale but yellow. This com-

plexion seemed to bespeak an irritable temper and violent passions. His hair, already silvered and carefully dressed, seemed to furrow his head with streaks of black and white alternately. The trimness of this head spoiled the resemblance I had remarked in the Count to the wonderful monk described by Lewis after Schedoni in the 'Confessional of the Black Penitents,' a superior creation, as it seems to me, to 'The Monk.'

"The Count was already shaved, having to attend early at the law courts. Two candelabra with four lights, screened by lamp-shades, were still burning at the opposite ends of the writing-table, and showed plainly that the magistrate rose long before daylight. His hands, which I saw when he took hold of the bell-pull to summon his servant, were extremely fine and as white as a woman's.

"As I tell you this story," said the consul-general, interrupting himself, "I am altering the titles and the social position of this gentleman, while placing him in circumstances analogous to what his really were. His profession, rank, luxury, fortune, and style of living were the same; all these details are true, but I will not be false to my benefactor, nor to my usual habits of discretion.

"Instead of feeling—as I really was, socially speaking—an insect in the presence of an eagle," the narrator went on after a pause, "I felt I know not what indefinable impression from the Count's appearance, which, however, I can now account for. Artists of genius" (and he bowed gracefully to the ambassador, the distinguished lady, and the two Frenchmen), "real statesmen, poets, a general who has commanded armies—in short, all really great minds are simple, and their simplicity places you on a level with themselves. You who are all of superior minds," he said, addressing his guests, "have perhaps observed how feeling can bridge over the distances created by society. If we are inferior to you in intellect, we can be your equals in devoted friendship. By the

temperature—allow me the word—of our hearts I felt myself as near my patron as I was far below him in rank. In short, the soul has its clairvoyance; it has presentiments of suffering, grief, joy, antagonism, or hatred in others.

"I vaguely discerned the symptoms of a mystery, from recognizing in the Count the same effects of physiognomy that I had observed in my uncle. The exercise of virtue, serenity of conscience, and purity of mind had transfigured my uncle, who from being ugly had become quite beautiful. I detected a metamorphosis of a reverse kind in the Count's face; at the first glance I thought he was about fifty-five, but after an attentive examination I found youth entombed under the ice of a great sorrow, under the fatigue of persistent study, under the glowing hues of some suppressed passion. At a word from my uncle the Count's eyes recovered for a moment the softness of the periwinkle flower and he had an admiring smile, which revealed what I believed to be his real age, about forty. These observations I made, not then but afterward, as I recalled the many different circumstances of my visit.

"The manservant came in carrying a tray with his master's breakfast on it.

"'I did not ask for breakfast,' remarked the Count; 'but leave it, and show monsieur to his rooms.'

"I followed the servant, who led the way to a complete set of pretty rooms, under a terrace, between the great courtyard and the servants' quarters, over a corridor of communication between the kitchens and the grand staircase. When I returned to the Count's study, I overheard, before opening the door, my uncle pronouncing this judgment on me—

"'He may do wrong, for he has strong feelings, and we are all liable to honorable mistakes; but he has no vices.'

"'Well,' said the Count to me, with a kindly look, 'do you like yourself there? Tell me. There are so many rooms

in this barrack that, if you were not comfortable, I could put you elsewhere.'

"'At my uncle's I had but one room,' I replied.

"'Well, you can settle yourself this evening,' said the Count, 'for your possessions, no doubt, are such as all students own and a hackney coach will be enough to convey them. To-day we will all three dine together,' and he looked at my uncle.

"A splendid library opened from the Count's study, and he took us in there, showing me a pretty little recess decorated with paintings, which had formerly served, no doubt, as an oratory.

"'This is your cell,' said he. 'You will sit there when you have to work with me, for you will not be tethered by a chain;' and he explained in detail the kind and duration of my employment with him. As I listened I felt that he was a great political teacher.

"It took me about a month to familiarize myself with people and things, to learn the duties of my new office, and accustom myself to the Count's methods. A secretary necessarily watches the man who makes use of him. That man's tastes, passions, temper, and manias become the subject of involuntary study. The union of their two minds is at once more and less than a marriage.

"During these months the Count and I reciprocally studied each other. I learned with astonishment that Comte Octave was but thirty-seven years old. The merely superficial peacefulness of his life and the propriety of his conduct were the outcome not solely of a deep sense of duty and of stoical reflection; in my constant intercourse with this man—an extraordinary man to those who knew him well—I felt vast depths beneath his toil, beneath his acts of politeness, his mask of benignity, his assumption of resignation, which so closely resembled calmness that it was easy to mistake it. Just as when walking through forest lands certain soils give

forth under our feet a sound which enables us to guess whether they are dense masses of stone or a void; so intense egoism, though hidden under the flowers of politeness, and subterranean caverns eaten out by sorrow sound hollow under the constant touch of familiar life. It was sorrow and not despondency that dwelt in that really great soul. The Count had understood that actions, deeds, are the supreme law of social man. And he went on his way in spite of secret wounds, looking to the future with a tranquil eye, like a martyr full of faith.

"His concealed sadness, the bitter disenchantment from which he suffered, had not led him into philosophical deserts of incredulity; this brave statesman was religious, but without ostentation; he always attended the earliest mass at Saint-Paul's for pious workmen and servants. Not one of his friends, no one at court, knew that he so punctually fulfilled the practice of religion. He was addicted to God as some men are addicted to a vice, with the greatest mystery. Thus one day I came to find the Count at the summit of an Alp of woe much higher than that on which many are who think themselves the most tried; who laugh at the passions and the beliefs of others because they have conquered their own; who play variations in every key of irony and disdain. He did not mock at those who still follow hope into the swamps whither she leads, nor those who climb a peak to be alone, nor those who persist in the fight, reddening the arena with their blood and strewing it with their illusions. He looked on the world as a whole; he mastered its beliefs; he listened to its complaining; he was doubtful of affection, and yet more of self-sacrifice; but this great and stern judge pitied them, or admired them, not with transient enthusiasm, but with silence, concentration, and the communion of a deeply touched soul. He was a sort of catholic Manfred, and unstained by crime, carrying his choiceness into his faith, melting the snows by all the deeply hidden and smoldering

fires of a sealed volcano, holding converse with a star seen by himself alone!

"I detected many dark riddles in his ordinary life. He evaded my gaze, not like a traveler who, following a path, disappears from time to time in dells or ravines according to the formation of the soil, but like a sharpshooter who is being watched, who wants to hide himself, and seeks a cover. I could not account for his frequent absences at times when he was working the hardest, and of which he made no secret from me, for he would say, 'Go on with this for me,' and trust me with the work in hand.

"This man, wrapped in the threefold duties of the statesman, the judge, and the orator, charmed me by a taste for flowers, which shows an elegant mind, and which is shared by almost all persons of refinement. His garden and his study were full of the rarest plants, but he always bought them half-withered. Perhaps it pleased him to see such an image of his own fate! He was faded like these dying flowers, whose almost decaying fragrance mounted strangely to his brain. The Count loved his country; he devoted himself to public interests with the frenzy of a heart that seeks to cheat some other passion; but the studies and work into which he threw himself were not enough for him; there were frightful struggles in his mind, of which some echoes reached me. Finally, he would give utterance to harrowing aspirations for happiness, and it seemed to me he ought yet to be happy; but what was the obstacle? Was there a woman he loved? This was a question I asked myself. You may imagine the extent of the circles of torment that my mind had searched before coming to so simple and so terrible a question. Notwithstanding his efforts, my patron did not succeed in stifling the movements of his heart. Under his austere manner, under the reserve of the magistrate, a passion rebelled, though coerced with such force that no one but I who lived with him ever guessed the secret. His motto seemed to be, 'I suffer and am silent.'

The escort of respect and admiration which attended him; the friendship of workers as valiant as himself—Grandville and Sérizy, both presiding judges—had no hold over the Count: either he told them nothing or they knew all. Impassible and lofty in public, the Count betrayed the man only on rare intervals when, alone in his garden or his study, he supposed himself unobserved; but then he was a child again, he gave course to the tears hidden beneath the toga, to the excitement which, if wrongly interpreted, might have damaged his credit for perspicacity as a statesman.

"When all this had become to me a matter of certainty, Comte Octave had all the attractions of a problem, and won on my affection as much as though he had been my own father. Can you enter into the feeling of curiosity, tempered by respect? What catastrophe had blasted this learned man, who, like Pitt, had devoted himself from the age of eighteen to the studies indispensable to power, while he had no ambition; this judge, who thoroughly knew the law of nations, political law, civil and criminal law, and who could find in these a weapon against every anxiety, against every mistake; this profound legislator, this serious writer, this pious celibate whose life sufficiently proved that he was open to no reproach? A criminal could not have been more hardly punished by God than was my master; sorrow had robbed him of half his slumbers; he never slept more than four hours. What struggle was it that went on in the depths of these hours apparently so calm, so studious, passing without a sound or a murmur, during which I often detected him, when the pen had dropped from his fingers, with his head resting on one hand, his eyes like two fixed stars, and sometimes wet with tears? How could the waters of that living spring flow over the burning strand without being dried up by the subterranean fire? Was there below it, as there is under the sea, between it and the central fires of the globe, a bed of granite? And would the volcano burst at last?

"Sometimes the Count would give me a look of that sagacious and keen-eyed curiosity by which one man searches another when he desires an accomplice; then he shunned my eye as he saw it open a mouth, so to speak, insisting on a reply, and seeming to say, 'Speak first!' Now and then Comte Octave's melancholy was surly and gruff. If these spurts of temper offended me, he could get over it without thinking of asking my pardon; but then his manners were gracious to the point of Christian humility.

"When I became attached like a son to this man—to me such a mystery, but so intelligible to the outer world, to whom the epithet eccentric is enough to account for all the enigmas of the heart—I changed the state of the house. Neglect of his own interests was carried by the Count to the length of folly in the management of his affairs. Possessing an income of about a hundred and sixty thousand francs, without including the emoluments of his appointments—three of which did not come under the law against plurality—he spent sixty thousand, of which at least thirty thousand went to his servants. By the end of the first year I had rid him of all these rascals, and begged his excellency to use his influence in helping me to get honest servants. By the end of the second year the Count, better fed and better served, enjoyed the comforts of modern life; he had fine horses, supplied by a coachman to whom I paid so much a month for each horse; his dinners on his reception days, furnished by Chevet at a price agreed upon, did him credit; his daily meals were prepared by an excellent cook found by my uncle, and helped by two kitchen-maids. The expenditure for housekeeping, not including purchases, was no more than thirty thousand francs a year; we had two additional menservants, whose care restored the poetical aspect of the house; for this old palace, splendid even in its rust, had an air of dignity which neglect had dishonored.

"'I am no longer astonished,' said he, on hearing of these

results, 'at the fortunes made by my servants. In seven years I have had two cooks, who have become rich restaurant-keepers.'

"'And in seven years you have lost a hundred thousand francs,' replied I. 'You, a judge, who in your court sign summonses against crime, encouraged robbery in your own house.'

"Early in the year 1826 the Count had, no doubt, ceased to watch me, and we were as closely attached as two men can be when one is subordinate to the other. He had never spoken to me of my future prospects, but he had taken an interest, both as a master and as a father, in training me. He often required me to collect materials for his most arduous labors; I drew up some of his reports and he corrected them, showing the difference between his interpretation of the law, his views and mine. When at last I had produced a document which he could give in as his own he was delighted; this satisfaction was my reward, and he could see that I took it so. This little incident produced an extraordinary effect on a soul which seemed so stern. The Count pronounced sentence on me, to use a legal phrase, as supreme and royal judge; he took my head in his hands, and kissed me on the forehead.

"'Maurice,' he exclaimed, 'you are no longer my apprentice; I know not yet what you will be to me—but if no change occurs in my life, perhaps you will take the place of a son.'

"Comte Octave had introduced me to the best houses in Paris, whither I went in his stead with his servants and carriage, on the too frequent occasions when, on the point of starting, he changed his mind and sent for a hackney cab to take him—Where?—that was the mystery. By the welcome I met with I could judge of the Count's feelings toward me and the earnestness of his recommendations. He supplied all my wants with the thoughtfulness of a father, and with all

the greater liberality because my modesty left it to him always to think of me. Toward the end of January, 1827, at the house of the Comtesse de Sérizy, I had such persistent ill-luck at play that I lost two thousand francs, and I would not draw them out of my savings. Next morning I asked myself, 'Had I better ask my uncle for the money, or put my confidence in the Count?'

"I decided on the second alternative.

"'Yesterday,' I said, when he was at breakfast, 'I lost persistently at play; I was provoked, and went on; I owe two thousand francs. Will you allow me to draw the sum on account of my year's salary?'

"'No,' said he, with the sweetest smile; 'when a man plays in society, he must have a gambling purse. Draw six thousand francs; pay your debts. Henceforth we must go halves; for since you are my representative on most occasions, your self-respect must not be made to suffer for it.'

"I made no speech of thanks. Thanks would have been superfluous between us. This shade shows the character of our relations. And as yet we had not unlimited confidence in each other; he did not open to me the vast subterranean chambers which I had detected in his secret life; and I, for my part, never said to him, 'What ails you? From what are you suffering?'

"What could he be doing during those long evenings? He would often come in on foot or in a hackney cab when I returned in a carriage—I, his secretary! Was so pious a man a prey to vices hidden under hypocrisy? Did he expend all the powers of his mind to satisfy a jealousy more dexterous than Othello's? Did he live with some woman unworthy of him? One morning, on returning from I have forgotten what store, where I had just paid a bill, between the church of Saint-Paul and the Hôtel de Ville, I came across Comte Octave in such eager conversation with an old woman that he did not see me. The appearance of this hag filled me with

strange suspicions, suspicions that were all the better founded because I never found that the Count invested his savings. Is it not shocking to think of? I was constituting myself my patron's censor. At that time I knew that he had more than six hundred thousand francs to invest; and if he had bought securities of any kind his confidence in me was so complete, in all that concerned his pecuniary interests, that I certainly should have known it.

"Sometimes, in the morning, the Count took exercise in his garden, to and fro, like a man to whom a walk is the hippogryph ridden by dreamy melancholy. He walked and walked! And he rubbed his hands enough to rub the skin off. And then, if I met him unexpectedly as he came to the angle of a path, I saw his face beaming. His eyes, instead of the hardness of a turquoise, had that velvety softness of the blue periwinkle, which had so much struck me on the occasion of my first visit, by reason of the astonishing contrast in the two different looks: the look of a happy man and the look of an unhappy man. Two or three times at such a moment he had taken me by the arm and led me on; then he had said, 'What have you come to ask?' instead of pouring out his joy into my heart that opened to him. But more often, especially since I could do his work for him and write his reports, the unhappy man would sit for hours staring at the gold fish that swarmed in a handsome marble basin in the middle of the garden, round which grew an amphitheatre of the finest flowers. He, an accomplished statesman, seemed to have succeeded in making a passion, a reigning hobby, of the mechanical amusement of crumbling bread to fishes.

"This is how the drama was disclosed of this second inner life, so deeply ravaged and storm-tossed, where, in a circle overlooked by Dante in his 'Inferno,' horrible joys had their birth."

The consul-general paused.

"On a certain Monday," he resumed, "as chance would have it, M. le Président de Grandville and M. de Sérizy (at that time vice-president of the council of state) had come to hold a meeting at the Comte Octave's house. They formed a committee of three, of which I was the secretary. The Count had already gotten me the appointment of auditor to the council of state. All the documents requisite for their inquiry into the political matter privately submitted to these three gentlemen were laid out on one of the long tables in the library. Messrs. de Grandville and de Sérizy had trusted to the Count to make the preliminary examination of the papers relating to the matter. To avoid the necessity for carrying all the papers to M. de Sérizy, as president of the commission, it was decided that they should meet first in the Rue Payenne. The cabinet at the Tuileries attached great importance to this piece of work, of which the chief burden fell on me—and to which, and my patron's efforts, I owed my appointment, in the course of that year, to be master of appeals.

"Though the Comtes de Grandville and de Sérizy, whose habits were much the same as my patron's, never dined away from home, we were still discussing the matter at a late hour, when we were startled by the manservant calling me aside to say, 'Messrs. the Curés of Saint-Paul and of the White Friars have been waiting in the drawing-room for two hours.'

"It was nine o'clock.

"'Well, gentlemen, you find yourselves compelled to dine with priests,' said Comte Octave to his colleagues. 'I do not know whether Grandville can overcome his horror of a priest's gown——'

"'It depends on the priest.'

"'One of them is my uncle and the other is the Abbé Gaudron,' said I. 'Do not be alarmed; the Abbé Fontanon is no longer second priest at Saint-Paul——'

"'Well, let us dine,' replied the Président de Grandville.

'A bigot frightens me, but there is no one so cheerful as a truly pious man.'

"We went into the drawing-room. The dinner was delightful. Men of real information, politicians to whom business gives both consummate experience and the practice of speech, are admirable story-tellers, when they tell stories. With them there is no medium; they are either heavy or they are sublime. In this delightful sport Prince Metternich is as good as Charles Nodier. The fun of a statesman, cut in facets like a diamond, is sharp, sparkling, and full of sense. Being sure that the proprieties would be observed by these three superior men, my uncle allowed his wit full play, a refined wit, gentle, penetrating, and elegant, like that of all men who are accustomed to conceal their thoughts under the black robe. And you may rely upon it, there was nothing vulgar nor idle in this light talk, which I would compare, for its effect on the soul, to Rossini's music.

"The Abbé Gaudron was, as M. de Grandville said, a Saint Peter rather than a Saint Paul, a peasant full of faith, as square on his feet as he was tall, a sacerdotal of whose ignorance in matters of the world and of literature enlivened the conversation by guileless amazement and unexpected questions. They came to talking of one of the plague spots of social life, of which we were just now speaking—adultery. My uncle remarked on the contradiction which the legislators of the code, still feeling the blows of the revolutionary storm, had established between civil and religious law, and which he maintained and insisted was at the root of all the mischief.

"'In the eyes of the church,' said he, 'adultery is a crime; in those of your tribunals it is a misdemeanor. Adultery drives to the police court in a carriage instead of standing at the bar to be tried. Napoleon's council of state, touched with tenderness toward erring women, was quite inefficient. Ought they not in this case to have harmonized the civil and

the religious law, and have sent the guilty wife to a convent, as of old?'

"'To a convent!' said M. de Sérizy. 'They must first have created convents, and in those days monasteries were being turned into barracks. Beside, think of what you say, Monsieur l'Abbé — give to God what society would have none of?'

"'Oh!' said the Comte de Grandville, 'you do not know France. They were obliged to leave the husband free to take proceedings; well, there are not ten cases of adultery brought up in a year.'

"'M. l'Abbé preaches for his own saint, for it was Jesus Christ who invented adultery,' said Comte Octave. 'In the East, the cradle of the human race, woman was merely a luxury, and was there regarded as a chattel; no virtues were demanded of her but obedience and beauty. By exalting the soul above the body, the modern family in Europe—a daughter of Christ—invented indissoluble marriage and made it a sacrament.'

"'Ah! the church saw all the difficulties,' exclaimed M. de Grandville.

"'This institution has given rise to a new world,' the Count went on with a smile. 'But the practice of that world will never be that of a climate where women are marriageable at seven years of age and more than old at five-and-twenty. The Catholic Church overlooked the needs of half the globe. So let us discuss Europe only.

"'Is woman our superior or our inferior? That is the real question so far as we are concerned. If woman is our inferior, by placing her on so high a level as the church does, fearful punishment for adultery were needful. And formerly that was what was done. The cloister or death sums up early legislation. But since then practice has modified the law, as is always the case. The throne served as a hot-bed for adultery, and the increase of this inviting crime marks the decline of

the dogmas of the Catholic Church. In these days, in cases where the church now exacts no more than sincere repentance from the erring wife, society is satisfied with a brand-mark instead of an execution. The law still condemns the guilty, but it no longer terrifies them. In short, there are two standards of morals: that of the world and that of the code. Where the code is weak, as I admit with our dear abbé, the world is audacious and satirical. There are so few judges who would not gladly have committed the fault against which they hurl the rather stolid thunders of their "Inasmuch." The world, which gives the lie to the law alike in its rejoicings, in its habits, and in its pleasures, is severer than the code and the church; the world punishes a blunder after encouraging hypocrisy. The whole economy of the law on marriage seems to me to require reconstruction from the bottom to the top. The French law would be perfect perhaps if it excluded daughters from inheriting.'

"'We three among us know the question very thoroughly,' said the Comte de Grandville with a laugh. 'I have a wife I cannot live with. Sérizy has a wife who will not live with him. As for you, Octave, yours ran away from you. So we three represent every case of the conjugal conscience, and, no doubt, if ever divorce is brought in again, we shall form the committee.'

"Octave's fork dropped on his glass, broke it, and broke his plate. He had turned pale as death, and flashed a thunderous glare at M. de Grandville, by which he hinted at my presence, and which I caught.

"'Forgive me, my dear fellow. I did not see Maurice,' the president went on. 'Sérizy and I, after being the witnesses to your marriage, became your accomplices; I did not think I was committing an indiscretion in the presence of these two venerable priests.'

"M. de Sérizy changed the subject by relating all he had done to please his wife without ever succeeding. The old

man concluded that it was impossible to regulate human sympathies and antipathies; he maintained that social law was never more perfect than when it was nearest to natural law. Now, nature takes no account of the affinities of souls; her aim is fulfilled by the propagation of the species. Hence, the code, in its present form, was wise in leaving a wide latitude to chance. The incapacity of daughters to inherit so long as there were male heirs was an excellent provision, whether to hinder the degeneration of the race, or to make households happier by abolishing scandalous unions and giving the sole preference to moral qualities and beauty.

"'But then,' he exclaimed, lifting his hand with a gesture of disgust, 'how are we to perfect legislation in a country which insists on bringing together seven or eight hundred legislators? After all, if I am sacrificed,' he added, 'I have a child to succeed me.'

"'Setting aside all the religious question,' my uncle said, 'I would remark to your excellency that nature only owes us life, and that it is society that owes us happiness. Are you a father?' asked my uncle.

"'And I—have I any children?' said Comte Octave in a hollow voice, and his tone made such an impression that there was no more talk of wives or marriage.

"When coffee had been served, the two Counts and the two priests stole away, seeing that poor Octave had fallen into a fit of melancholy, which prevented his noticing their disappearance. My patron was sitting in an armchair by the fire, in the attitude of a man crushed.

"'You now know the secret of my life,' said he to me on noticing that we were alone. 'After three years of married life, one evening when I came in I found a letter in which the Countess announced her flight. The letter did not lack dignity, for it is in the nature of women to preserve some virtues even when committing that horrible sin. The story now is that my wife went abroad in a ship that was wrecked;

she is supposed to be dead. I have lived alone for seven years! Enough for this evening, Maurice. We will talk of my situation when I have grown used to the idea of speaking of it to you. When we suffer from a chronic disease, it needs time to become accustomed to improvement. That improvement often seems to be merely another aspect of the complaint.'

"I went to bed greatly agitated; for the mystery, far from being explained, seemed to me more obscure than ever. I foresaw some strange drama indeed, for I understood that there could be no vulgar difference between the woman the Count could choose and such a character as his. The events which had driven the Countess to leave a man so noble, so amiable, so perfect, so loving, so worthy to be loved, must have been singular, to say the least. M. de Grandville's remark had been like a torch flung into the caverns over which I had so long been walking; and though the flame lighted them but dimly, my eyes could perceive their wide extent! I could imagine the Count's sufferings without knowing their depth or their bitterness. That sallow face, those parched temples, those overwhelming studies, those moments of absent-mindedness, the smallest details of the life of this married bachelor, all stood out in luminous relief during the hour of mental questioning, which is, as it were, the twilight before sleep, and to which any man would have given himself up, as I did.

"Oh! how I loved my poor master! He seemed to me sublime. I read a poem of melancholy, I saw perpetual activity in the heart I had accused of being torpid. Must not supreme grief always come at last to stagnation? Had this judge, who had so much in his power, ever revenged himself? Was he feeding himself on her long agony? Is it not a remarkable thing in Paris to keep anger always seething for ten years? What had Octave done since this great misfortune—for the separation of husband and wife is a great

misfortune in our day, when domestic life has become a social question, which it never was of old?

"We allowed a few days to pass on the watch, for great sorrows have a diffidence of their own; but at last, one evening, the Count said in a grave voice—

"'Stay.'

"This, as nearly as may be, is his story:

"'My father had a ward, rich and lovely, who was sixteen at the time when I came back from college to live in this old house. Honorine, who had been brought up by my mother, was just awaking to life. Full of grace and of childlike ways, she dreamed of happiness as she would have dreamed of jewels; perhaps happiness seemed to her the jewels of the soul. Her piety was not free from puerile pleasures; for everything, even religion, was poetry to her ingenuous heart. She looked to the future as a perpetual fête. Innocent and pure, no delirium had disturbed her dream. Shame and grief had never tinged her cheek nor moistened her eye. She did not even inquire into the secret of her involuntary emotions on a fine spring day. And, then, she felt that she was weak and destined to obedience, and she awaited marriage without wishing for it. Her smiling imagination knew nothing of the corruption—necessary perhaps—which literature imparts by depicting the passions; she knew nothing of the world, and was ignorant of all the dangers of society. The dear child had suffered so little that she had not even developed her courage. In short, her guilelessness would have led her to walk fearlessly among serpents, like the ideal figure of Innocence a painter once created. We lived together like two brothers. An ideal life.

"'At the end of a year I said to her one day, in the garden of this house, by the basin, as we stood throwing crumbs to the fish—

"'"Would you like that we should be married? With me

you could do whatever you please, while another man would make you unhappy."

"'"Mamma," said she to my mother, who came out to join us, "Octave and I have agreed to be married——"

"'"What! at seventeen?" said my mother. "No; you must wait eighteen months; and if eighteen months hence you like each other, well, your birth and fortunes are equal, you can make a marriage which is suitable, as well as being a love match."

"'When I was six-and-twenty and Honorine nineteen, we were married. Our respect for my father and mother, old folk of the Bourbon court, hindered us from making this house fashionable or renewing the furniture; we lived on, as we had done in the past, as children. However, I went into society; I initiated my wife into the world of fashion; and I regarded it as one of my duties to instruct her.

"'I recognized afterward that marriages contracted under such circumstances as ours bear in themselves a rock against which many affections are wrecked, many prudent calculations, many lives. The husband becomes a pedagogue, or, if you like, a professor, and love perishes under the rod which, soon or later, gives pain; for a young and handsome wife, at once discreet and laughter-loving, will not accept any superiority above that with which she is endowed by nature. Perhaps I was in the wrong. During the difficult beginnings of a household I, perhaps, assumed a magisterial tone. On the other hand, I may have made the mistake of trusting too entirely to that artless nature; I kept no watch over the Countess, in whom revolt seemed to me impossible. Alas! neither in politics nor domestic life has it yet been ascertained whether empires and happiness are wrecked by too much confidence or too much severity! Perhaps, again, the husband failed to realize Honorine's girlish dreams? Who can tell, while happy days last, what precepts he has neglected.'

"I remember only the broad outlines of the reproaches the

Count addressed to himself, with all the good faith of an anatomist seeking the cause of a disease which might be overlooked by his brethren; but his merciful indulgence struck me then as equally worthy as that of Jesus Christ when He rescued the woman taken in adultery.

"'It was eighteen months after my father's death—my mother followed him to the tomb in a few months—when the fearful night came which surprised me by Honorine's farewell letter. What poetic delusion had seduced my wife? Was it through her senses? Was it the magnetism of misfortune or of genius? Which of these powers had taken her by storm or misled her? I would not know. The blow was so terrible that for a month I remained stunned. Afterward, reflection counseled me to continue in ignorance, and Honorine's misfortunes have since taught me too much about all these things. So far, Maurice, the story is commonplace enough; but one word will change it all: I love Honorine, I have never ceased to worship her. From the day when she left me I have lived on memory; one by one I recall the pleasures for which Honorine, no doubt, had no taste.

"'Oh!' said he, seeing the amazement in my eyes, 'do not make a hero of me, do not think me such a fool, as a colonel of the Empire would say, as to have sought no diversion. Alas, my boy! I was either too young or too much in love; I have not in the whole world met with another woman. After frightful struggles with myself, I tried to forget; money in hand, I stood on the very threshold of infidelity, but there the memory of Honorine rose before me like a white statue. As I recalled the infinite delicacy of that exquisite skin, through which the blood might be seen coursing and the nerves quivering; as I saw in fancy that ingenuous face, as guileless on the eve of my sorrows as on the day when I said to her, "Shall we marry?" as I remembered a heavenly fragrance, the very odor of virtue, and the light in her eyes, the prettiness of her movements, I fled like a man preparing

to violate a tomb, who sees emerging from it the transfigured soul of the dead. At consultations, in court, by night, I dream so incessantly of Honorine that only by excessive strength of mind do I succeed in attending to what I am doing and saying. This is the secret of my labors.

" ' Well, I felt no more anger with her than a father can feel on seeing his beloved child in some danger it has imprudently rushed into. I understood that I had made a poem of my wife—a poem I delighted in with such intoxication that I fancied she shared the intoxication. Ah ! Maurice, an indiscriminating passion in a husband is a mistake that may lead to any crime in a wife. I had no doubt left all the faculties of this child, loved as a child, entirely unemployed ; I had perhaps wearied her with my love before the hour of loving had struck for her ! Too young to understand that in the constancy of the wife lies the germ of the mother's devotion, she mistook this first test of marriage for life itself, and the refractory child cursed life, unknown to me, not daring to complain to me, out of sheer modesty perhaps ! In so cruel a position she would be defenseless against any man who stirred her deeply. And I, so wise a judge as they say—I, who have a kind heart, but whose mind was absorbed—I understood too late these unwritten laws of the woman's code ; I read them by the light of the fire that wrecked my roof. Then I constituted my heart a tribunal by virtue of the law, for the law makes the husband a judge : I acquitted my wife, and I condemned myself. But love took possession of me as a passion, the mean, despotic passion which comes over some old men. At this day I love the absent Honorine as a man of sixty loves a woman whom he must possess at any cost, and yet I feel the strength of a young man. I have the insolence of the old man and the reserve of a boy. My dear fellow, society only laughs at such a desperate conjugal predicament. Where it pities a lover, it regards a husband as ridiculously inept ; it makes sport of those who cannot keep

the woman they have secured under the canopy of the church and before the mayor's scarf of office. And I had to keep silence.

"'Sérizy is happy. His indulgence allows him to see his wife; he can protect and defend her; and, as he adores her, he knows all the perfect joys of a benefactor whom nothing can disturb, not even ridicule, for he pours it himself on his fatherly pleasures. "I remain married only for my wife's sake," he said to me one day on coming out of court.

"'But I—I have nothing; I have not even to face ridicule, I who live solely on a love which is starving! I who can never find a word to say to a woman of the world! I who loathe prostitution! I who am faithful under a spell! But for my religious faith, I should have killed myself. I have defied the gulf of hard work; I have thrown myself into it, and come out again alive, fevered, burning, ever bereft of sleep!——'

"I cannot remember all the words of this eloquent man, to whom passion gave an eloquence indeed so far above that of the pleader that, as I listened to him, I, like him, felt my cheeks wet with tears. You may conceive of my feelings when, after a pause, during which we dried them away, he finished his story with this revelation:

"'This is the drama of my soul, but it is not the actual living drama which is at this moment being acted in Paris! The interior drama interests nobody. I know it; and you will one day admit that it is so, you, who at this moment shed tears with me; no one can burden his heart or his skin with another's pain. The measure of our sufferings is in ourselves. You even understand my sorrows only by very vague analogy. Could you see me calming the most violent frenzy of despair by the contemplation of a miniature in which I can see and kiss her brow, the smile on her lips, the shape of her face, can breathe the whiteness of her skin; which enables me almost to feel, to play with the black masses of her curling

hair? Could you see me when I leap with hope—when I writhe under the myriad darts of despair—when I tramp through the mire of Paris to quell my irritation by fatigue? I have fits of collapse comparable to those of a comsumptive patient, moods of wild hilarity, terrors as of a murderer who meets a sergeant of police. In short, my life is a continual paroxysm of fears, joy, and dejection.

"'As to the drama—it is this: You imagine that I am occupied with the council of state, the chamber, the courts, politics. Why, dear me, seven hours at night are enough for all that, so much are my faculties overwrought by the life I lead! Honorine is my real concern. To recover my wife is my only study; to guard her in her cage, without her suspecting that she is in my power; to satisfy her needs, to supply the little pleasure she allows herself, to be always about her like a sylph without allowing her to see or to suspect me, for, if she did, the future would be lost—that is my life, my true life. For seven years I have never gone to bed without going first to see the light of her night-lamp or her shadow on the window curtains.

"'She left my house, choosing to take nothing but the dress she wore that day. The child carried her magnanimity to the point of folly! Consequently, eighteen months after her flight she was deserted by her lover, who was appalled by the cold, cruel, sinister, and revolting aspect of poverty—the coward! The man had, no doubt, counted on the easy and luxurious life in Switzerland or Italy which fine ladies indulge in when they leave their husbands. Honorine has sixty thousand francs a year of her own. The wretch left the dear creature expecting an infant, and without a penny. In the month of November, 1820, I found means to persuade the best accoucheur in Paris to play the part of a humble suburban apothecary. I induced the priest of the parish in which the Countess was living to supply her needs as though he were performing an act of charity. Then to hide my wife, to

secure her against discovery, to find her a housekeeper who would be devoted to me and be my intelligent confidante—it was a task worthy of Figaro! You may suppose that to discover where my wife had taken refuge I had only to make up my mind to it.

"'After three months of desperation rather than despair, the idea of devoting myself to Honorine, with God only in my secret, was one of those poems which occur only to the heart of a lover through life and death! Love must have its daily food. And ought I not to protect this child, whose guilt was the outcome of my imprudence, against fresh disaster—to fulfill my part, in short, as a guardian angel? At the age of seven months her infant died, happily for her and for me. For nine months more my wife lay between life and death, deserted at the time when she most needed a manly arm; but this arm,' said he, holding out his own with a gesture of angelic dignity, 'was extended over her head. Honorine was nursed as she would have been in her own home. When, on her recovery, she asked how and by whom she had been assisted, she was told—"By the sisters of charity in the neighborhood—by the maternity society—by the parish priest, who took an interest in her."

"'This woman, whose pride amounts to a vice, has shown a power of resistance in misfortune, which on some evenings I call the obstinacy of a mule. Honorine was bent on earning her living. My wife works! For five years past I have lodged her in the Rue Saint-Maur, in a charming little house, where she makes artificial flowers and articles of fashion. She believes that she sells the product of her elegant fancy-work to a shop, where she is so well paid that she makes twenty francs a day, and in these six years she has never had a moment's suspicion. She pays for everything she needs at about the third of its value, so that on six thousand francs a year she lives as if she had fifteen thousand. She is devoted to flowers, and pays a hundred crowns to a gardener, who

costs me twelve hundred in wages and sends me in a bill for two thousand francs every three months. I have promised the man a market-garden with a house on it close to the porter's lodge in the Rue Saint-Maur. I hold this ground in the name of a clerk of the law courts. The smallest indiscretion would ruin the gardener's prospects. Honorine has her little house, a garden, and a splendid hot-house, for a rent of five hundred francs a year. There she lives under the name of her housekeeper, Madame Gobain, the old woman of impeccable discretion whom I was so lucky as to find, and whose affection Honorine has won. But her zeal, like that of the gardener, is kept hot by the promise of reward at the moment of success. The porter and his wife cost me dreadfully dear for the same reasons. However, for three years Honorine has been happy, believing that she owes to her own toil all the luxury of flowers, dress, and comfort.

"'Oh! I know what you are about to say,' cried the Count, seeing a question in my eyes and on my lips. 'Yes, yes; I have made the attempt. My wife was formerly living in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. One day when, from what Gobain told me, I believed in some chance of a reconciliation, I wrote by post a letter, in which I tried to propitiate my wife—a letter written and re-written twenty times! I will not describe my agonies. I went from the Rue Payenne to the Rue de Reuilly like a condemned wretch going from the Palais de Justice to his execution; but he goes on a cart, and I was on foot. It was dark—there was a fog; I went to meet Madame Gobain, who was to come and tell me what my wife had done. Honorine, on recognizing my writing, had thrown the letter into the fire without reading it. "Madame Gobain," she had exclaimed, "I leave this to-morrow."

"'What a dagger-stroke was this to a man who found inexhaustible pleasure in the trickery by which he gets the finest Lyons velvet at twelve francs a yard, a pheasant, a fish, a dish

of fruit, for a tenth of their value, for a woman so ignorant as to believe that she is paying ample wages with two hundred and fifty francs to Madame Gobain, a cook fit for a bishop.

"'You have sometimes found me rubbing my hands in the enjoyment of a sort of happiness. Well, I had just succeeded in some ruse worthy of the stage. I had just deceived my wife—I had sent her by a purchaser of wardrobes an India shawl, to be offered to her as the property of an actress who had hardly worn it, but in which I—the solemn lawyer whom you know—had wrapped myself for a night! In short, my life at this day may be summed up in the two words which express the extremes of torment—I love and I wait! I have in Madame Gobain a faithful spy on the heart I worship. I go every evening to chat with the old woman, to hear from her all that Honorine has done during the day, the lightest word she has spoken, for a single exclamation might betray to me the secrets of that soul which is willfully deaf and dumb. Honorine is pious; she attends the church services and prays, but she has never been to confession or taken the communion; she foresees what a priest would tell her. She will not listen to the advice, to the injunction, that she should return to me. This horror of me overwhelms me, dismays me, for I have never done her the smallest harm. I have always been kind to her. Granting even that I may have been a little hasty when teaching her, that my man's irony may have hurt her legitimate girlish pride, is that a reason for persisting in a determination which only the most implacable hatred could have inspired? Honorine has never told Madame Gobain whom she is; she keeps absolute silence as to her marriage, so that the worthy and respectable woman can never speak a word in my favor, for she is the only person in the house who knows my secret. The others know nothing; they live under the awe caused by the name of the prefect of police, and their respect for the power of a minister. Hence it is impossible for me to penetrate that heart; the citadel is

mine, but I cannot get into it. I have not a single means of action. An act of violence would ruin me for ever.

"'How can I argue against reasons of which I know nothing? Should I write a letter and have it copied by a public writer, and laid before Honorine? But that would be to run the risk of a third removal. The last cost me fifty thousand francs. The purchase was made in the first instance in the name of the secretary whom you succeeded. The unhappy man, who did not know how lightly I sleep, was detected by me in the act of opening the box in which I had put the private agreement; I coughed, and he was seized with a panic; next day I compelled him to sell the house to the man in whose name it now stands, and I turned him out.

"'If it were not that I feel all my noblest faculties as a man satisfied, happy, expansive; if the part I am playing were not that of divine fatherhood; if I did not drink in delight by every pore, there are moments when I should believe that I was a monomaniac. Sometimes at night I hear the jingling bells of madness. I dread the violent transitions from a feeble hope, which sometimes shines and flashes up, to complete despair, falling as low as man can fall. A few days since I was seriously considering the horrible end of the story of Lovelace and Clarissa Harlowe, and saying to myself, "If Honorine were the mother of a child of mine, must she not necessarily return under her husband's roof?"

"'And I have such complete faith in a happy future that, ten months ago, I bought and paid for one of the handsomest houses in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. If I win back Honorine, I will not allow her to see this house again, nor the room from which she fled. I mean to place my idol in a new temple, where she may feel that life is altogether new. That house is being made a marvel of elegance and taste. I have been told of a poet who, being almost mad with love for an actress, bought the handsomest bed in Paris without knowing how the actress would reward his passion. Well, one of the

coldest of lawyers, a man who is supposed to be the gravest adviser of the crown, was stirred to the depths of his heart by that anecdote. The orator of the legislative chamber can understand the poet who fed his ideal on material possibilities. Three days before the arrival of Maria Louisa, Napoleon flung himself on his wedding-bed at Compiègne. All stupendous passions have the same impulses. I love as a poet—as an emperor!'

"As I heard the last words, I believed that Comte Octave's fears were realized; he had risen, and was walking up and down, and gesticulating, but he stopped as if shocked by the vehemence of his own words.

"'I am very ridiculous,' he added, after a long pause, looking at me, as if craving a glance of pity.

"'No, monsieur, you are very unhappy.'

"'Ah, yes!' said he, taking up the thread of his confidences. 'From the violence of my speech you may, you must believe in the intensity of a physical passion which for nine years has absorbed all my faculties; but that is nothing in comparison with the worship I feel for the soul, the mind, the heart, all in that woman that is not mere woman; the enchanting divinities in the train of love, with whom we pass our life, and who form the daily poem of a fugitive delight. By a phenomenon of retrospection I see now the graces of Honorine's mind and heart, to which I paid little heed in the time of my happiness—like all who are happy. From day to day I have appreciated the extent of my loss, discovering the exquisite gifts of that capricious and refractory young creature who has grown so strong and so proud under the heavy hand of poverty and the shock of the most cowardly desertion. And that heavenly blossom is fading in solitude and hiding! Ah! The law of which we were speaking,' he went on with bitter irony, 'the law is a squad of gendarmes—my wife seized and dragged away by force! Would not that be to triumph over a corpse? Religion has no hold on her; she craves its poetry,

she prays, but she does not listen to the commandments of the church. I, for my part, have exhausted everything in the way of mercy, of kindness, of love; I am at my wits' end. Only one chance of victory is left to me: the cunning and patience with which bird-catchers at last entrap the wariest birds, the swiftest, the most capricious, and the rarest. Hence, Maurice, when Monsieur de Grandville's indiscretion betrayed to you the secret of my life, I ended by regarding this incident as one of the decrees of fate, one of the utterances for which gamblers listen and pray in the midst of their most impassioned play. Have you enough affection for me to show me romantic devotion?'

"'I see what you are coming to, Monsieur le Comte,' said I, interrupting him; 'I guess your purpose. Your first secretary tried to open your deed box. I know the heart of your second—he might fall in love with your wife. And can you devote him to destruction by sending him into the fire? Can any one put his hand into a brasier without burning it?'

"'You are a foolish boy,' replied the Count. 'I will send you well gloved. It is no secretary of mine that will be lodged in the Rue Saint-Maur in the little garden-house which I have at his disposal. It is my distant cousin, Baron de L'Hostal, a lawyer high in office.'

"After a moment of silent surprise, I heard the gate bell ring, and a carriage came into the courtyard. Presently the footman announced Madame de Courteville and her daughter. The Count had a large family connection on his mother's side. Madame de Courteville, his cousin, was the widow of a judge on the bench of the Seine division, who had left her a daughter and no fortune whatever. What could a woman of nine-and-twenty be in comparison with a young girl of twenty, as lovely as imagination could wish for an ideal mistress?

"'Baron and master of appeals, till you get something better, and this old house settled on her—would you not

have enough good reasons for not falling in love with the Countess?' he said to me in a whisper, as he took me by the hand and introduced me to Madame de Courteville and her daughter.

"I was dazzled, not so much by these advantages of which I had never dreamed, but by Amélie de Courteville, whose beauty was thrown into relief by one of those well-chosen toilets which a mother can achieve for a daughter when she wants to see her married.

"But I will not talk of myself," said the consul after a pause.

"Three weeks later I went to live in the gardener's cottage, which had been cleaned, repaired, and furnished with the celerity which is explained by three words: Paris; French workmen; money! I was as much in love as the Count could possibly desire as a security. Would the prudence of a young man of twenty-five be equal to the part I was undertaking, involving a friend's happiness? To settle that matter, I may confess that I counted very much on my uncle's advice; for I had been authorized by the Count to take him into confidence in any case where I deemed his interference necessary. I engaged a garden; I devoted myself to horticulture; I worked frantically, like a man whom nothing can divert, turning up the soil of the market-garden, and appropriating the ground to the culture of flowers. Like the maniacs of England, or of Holland, I gave it out that I was devoted to one kind of flower, and especially grew dahlias, collecting every variety. You will understand that my conduct, even in the smallest detail, was laid down for me by the Count, whose whole intellectual powers were directed to the most trifling incidents of the tragi-comedy enacted in the Rue Saint-Maur. As soon as the Countess had gone to bed, at about eleven at night, Octave, Madame Gobain, and I sat in council. I heard the old woman's report to the Count of his wife's least proceedings during the day.

He inquired into everything: her meals, her occupations, her frame of mind, her plans for the morrow, the flowers she proposed to imitate. I understood what love in despair may be when it is the threefold passion of the heart, the mind, and the senses. Octave lived only for that hour.

"During two months, while my work in the garden lasted, I never set eyes on the little house where my fair neighbor dwelt. I had not even inquired whether I had a neighbor, though the Countess' garden was divided from mine by a paling, along which she had planted cypress trees already four feet high. One fine morning Madame Gobain announced to her mistress, as a disastrous piece of news, the intention, expressed by an eccentric creature who had become her neighbor, of building a wall between the two gardens, at the end of the year. I will say nothing of the curiosity which consumed me to see the Countess! The wish almost extinguished my budding love for Amélie de Courteville. My scheme for building a wall was indeed a serious threat. There would be no more fresh air for Honorine, whose garden would then be a sort of narrow alley shut in between my wall and her own little house. This dwelling, formerly a summer villa, was like a house of cards; it was not more than thirty feet deep and about a hundred feet long. The garden front, painted in the German fashion, imitated a trellis with flowers up to the second floor, and was a really charming example of the pompadour style, so well called rococo. A long avenue of limes led up to it. The gardens of the pavilion and my plot of ground were in the shape of a hatchet, of which this avenue was the handle. My wall would cut away three-quarters of the hatchet.

"The Countess was in despair.

"'My good Gobain,' said she, 'what sort of a man is this florist?'

"'On my word,' said the housekeeper, 'I do not know whether it will be possible to tame him. He seems to have

a horror of women. He is the nephew of a Paris curé. I have seen the uncle but once; a fine old man of sixty, very ugly, but very amiable. It is quite possible that this priest encourages his nephew, as they say in the neighborhood, in his love of flowers, that nothing worse may happen——'

"'Why—what?'

"'Well, your neighbor is a little cracked!' said Gobain, tapping her head!

"Now a harmless lunatic is the only man whom no woman ever distrusts in the matter of sentiment. You will see how wise the Count had been in choosing this disguise for me.

"'What ails him then?' asked the Countess.

"'He has studied too hard,' replied Gobain; 'he has turned misanthropic. And he has his reasons for disliking women—well, if you want to know all that is being said about him——'

"'Well,' said Honorine, 'madmen frighten me less than sane folk; I will speak to him myself! Tell him that I beg him to come here. If I do not succeed, I will send for the curé.'

"The day after this conversation, as I was walking along my graveled path, I caught sight of the half-opened curtains on the second floor of the little house, and of a woman's face curiously peeping out. Madame Gobain called me. I hastily glanced at the Countess' house, and by a rude shrug expressed, 'What do I care for your mistress?'

"'Madame,' said Gobain, called upon to give an account of her errand, 'the madman bid me leave him in peace, saying that even a charcoal-seller is master in his own premises, especially when he has no wife.'

"'He is perfectly right,' said the Countess.

"'Yes, but he ended by saying, "I will go," when I told him that he would greatly distress a lady living in retirement, who found her greatest solace in growing flowers.'

"Next day a signal from Gobain informed me that I was

expected. After the Countess' breakfast, when she was walking to and fro in front of her house, I broke out some palings and went toward her. I had dressed myself like a countryman, in an old pair of gray flannel trousers, heavy wooden shoes, and shabby shooting coat, a peaked cap on my head, a ragged bandana round my neck, hands soiled with mold, and a dibble in my hand.

"'Madame,' said the housekeeper, 'this good man is your neighbor.'

"The Countess was not alarmed. I saw at last the woman whom her own conduct and her husband's confidences had made me so curious to meet. It was in the early days of May. The air was pure, the weather serene; the verdure of the first foliage, the fragrance of spring formed a setting for this creature of sorrow. As I then saw Honorine I understood Octave's passion and the truthfulness of his description, 'A heavenly flower!'

"Her pallor was what first struck me by its peculiar tone of white—for there are as many tones of white as of red or blue. On looking at the Countess, the eye seemed to feel that tender skin, where the blood flowed in the blue veins. At the slightest emotion the blood mounted under the surface in rosy flushes like a cloud. When we met, the sunshine, filtering through the light foliage of the acacias, shed on Honorine the pale gold, ambient glory in which Raphael and Titian, alone of all painters, have been able to enwrap the Virgin. Her brown eyes expressed both tenderness and vivacity; their brightness seemed reflected in her face through the long downcast lashes. Merely by lifting her delicate eyelids, Honorine could cast a spell; there was so much feeling, dignity, terror, or contempt in her way of raising or dropping those veils of the soul. She could freeze or give life by a look. Her light-brown hair, carelessly knotted on her head, outlined a poet's brow, high, powerful, and dreamy. The mouth was wholly voluptuous. And to crown all by a grace,

rare in France, though common in Italy, all the lines and forms of the head had a stamp of nobleness which would defy the outrages of time.

"Though slight, Honorine was not thin, and her figure struck me as being one that might revive love when it believed itself exhausted. She perfectly represented the idea conveyed by the word *mignonne* (darling), for she was one of those pliant little women who allow themselves to be taken up, petted, set down, and taken up again like a kitten. Her small feet, as I heard them on the gravel, made a light sound essentially their own, that harmonized with the rustle of her dress, producing a feminine music which stamped itself on the heart, and remained distinct from the footfall of a thousand other women. Her gait bore all the quarterings of her race with so much pride, that, in the street, the least respectful workingman would have made way for her. Gay and tender, haughty and imposing, it was impossible to understand her, excepting as gifted with these apparently incompatible qualities, which, nevertheless, had left her still a child. But it was a child who might be as strong as an angel; and, like the angel, once hurt in her nature, she would be implacable.

"Coldness on that face must no doubt be death to those on whom her eyes had smiled, for whom her set lips had parted, for those whose soul had drunk in the melody of that voice, lending to her words the poetry of song by its peculiar intonation. Inhaling the perfume of violets that accompanied her, I understood how the memory of this wife had arrested the Count on the threshold of debauchery, and how impossible it would be ever to forget a creature who really was a flower to the touch, a flower to the eye, a flower of fragrance, a heavenly flower to the soul—— Honorine inspired devotion, chivalrous devotion, regardless of reward. A man on seeing her must say to himself—

"'Think, and I will divine your thought; speak, and I will obey. If my life, sacrificed in torments, can procure

you one day's happiness, take my life; I will smile like a martyr at the stake, for I shall offer that day to God, as a token to which a father responds on recognizing a gift to his child.' Many women study their expression, and succeed in producing effects similar to those which would have struck you at first sight of the Countess; only, in her, it all was the outcome of a delightful nature, an inimitable nature that went at once to the heart. If I tell you all this, it is because her soul, her thoughts, the exquisiteness of her heart, are all we are concerned with, and you would have blamed me if I had not sketched them for you.

"I was very near forgetting my part as a half-crazy lout, clumsy, and by no means chivalrous.

"'I have been told, madame, that you are very fond of flowers?'

"'I am an artificial flower-maker,' said she. 'After growing flowers, I imitate them, like a mother who is artist enough to have the pleasure of painting portraits of her children. That is enough to tell you that I am poor and unable to pay for the concession that I am anxious to obtain from you?'

"'But how,' said I, as grave as a judge, 'can a lady of such rank as yours would seem to be, ply so humble a calling? Have you, like me, good reasons for employing your fingers so as to keep your brain from working?'

"'Let us stick to the question of the wall,' said she with a smile.

"'Why we have begun at the foundations,' I rejoined. 'Must I not know which of us ought to yield to the other in behalf of our suffering, or, if you choose, of our mania? Oh! what a charming clump of narcissus! They are as fresh as this spring morning!'

"I assure you, she had made for herself a perfect museum of flowers and shrubs, which none might see but the sun, and of which the arrangement had been prompted by the genius of an artist; the most heartless of landlords must have treated

it with respect. The masses of plants, arranged according to their height, or in single clumps, were really a joy to the soul. This retired and solitary garden breathed comforting scents, and suggested none but sweet thoughts and graceful, nay, voluptuous pictures. On it was set that inscrutable sign-manual, which our true character stamps on everything, as soon as nothing compels us to obey the various hypocrisies, necessary as they are, which society insists upon. I looked alternately at the mass of narcissus and at the Countess, affecting to be far more in love with the flowers than with her, to carry out my part.

"'So you are very fond of flowers?' said she.

"'They are,' I replied, 'the only beings that never disappoint our cares and affection.' And I went on to deliver such a diatribe while comparing botany and the world, that we ended miles away from the dividing wall, and the Countess must have supposed me to be a wretched and wounded sufferer worthy of her pity. However, at the end of half an hour my neighbor naturally brought me back to the point; for women, when they are not in love, have all the cold blood of an experienced attorney.

"'If you insist on my leaving the paling,' said I, 'you will learn all the secrets of gardening that I want to hide; I am seeking to grow a blue dahlia, a blue rose; I am crazy for blue flowers. Is not blue the favorite color of superior souls? We are neither of us really at home; we might as well make a little door of open railings to unite our gardens. You, too, are fond of flowers; you will see mine, I shall see yours. If you receive no visitors at all, I, for my part, have none but my uncle, the curé of the white friars.'

"'No,' said she, 'I will give you the right to come into my garden, my premises, at any hour. Come and welcome; you will always be admitted as a neighbor with whom I hope to keep on good terms. But I like my solitude too well to burden it with any loss of independence.'

"'As you please,' said I, and with one leap I was over the paling.

"'Now, of what use would a door be?' said I, from my own domain, turning round to the Countess, and mocking her with a madman's gesture and grimace.

"For a fortnight I seemed to take no heed of my neighbor. Toward the end of May, one lovely evening, we happened both to be out on opposite sides of the paling, both walking slowly. Having reached the end, we could not help exchanging a few civil words; she found me in such deep dejection, lost in such painful meditations, that she spoke to me of hopefulness, in brief sentences that sounded like the songs with which nurses lull their babes. I then leaped the fence and found myself for the second time at her side. The Countess led me into the house, wishing to subdue my sadness. So at last I had penetrated the sanctuary where everything was in harmony with the woman I have tried to describe to you.

"Exquisite simplicity reigned there. The interior of the little house was just such a dainty box as the art of the eighteenth century devised for the pretty profligacy of a fine gentleman. The dining-room, on the first floor, was painted in fresco, with garlands of flowers, admirably and marvelously executed. The staircase was charmingly decorated in monochrome. The little drawing-room, opposite the dining-room, was very much faded; but the Countess had hung it with panels of tapestry of fanciful designs, taken off old screens. A bath-room came next. Upstairs there was but one bedroom, with a dressing-room, and a library which she used as her workroom. The kitchen was beneath in the basement on which the house was raised, for there was a flight of several steps outside. The balustrade of a balcony in garlands *à la* pompadour concealed the roof; only the lead cornices were visible. In this retreat one was a hundred leagues from Paris.

"But for the bitter smile which occasionally played on the beautiful red lips of this pale woman, it would have been

possible to believe that this violet buried in her thicket of flowers was happy. In a few days we had reached a certain degree of intimacy, the result of our close neighborhood and of the Countess' conviction that I was indifferent to women. A look would have spoilt all, and I never allowed a thought of her to be seen in my eyes. Honorine chose to regard me as an old friend. Her manner to me was the outcome of a kind of pity. Her looks, her voice, her words, all showed that she was a hundred miles away from the coquettish airs which the strictest virtue might have allowed under such circumstances. She soon gave me the right to go into the pretty workshop where she made her flowers, a retreat full of books and curiosities, as smart as a boudoir, where elegance emphasized the vulgarity of the tools of her trade. The Countess had in the course of time poetized, as I may say, a thing which is at the antipodes to poetry—a manufacture.

"Perhaps of all the work a woman can do, the making of artificial flowers is that of which the details allow her to display most grace. For coloring prints she must sit bent over a table and devote herself, with some attention, to this half-painting. Embroidering tapestry, as diligently as a woman must who is to earn her living by it, entails consumption or curvature of the spine. Engraving music is one of the most laborious, by the care, the minute exactitude, and the intelligence it demands. Sewing and white embroidery do not earn thirty sous a day. But the making of flowers and light articles of wear necessitates a variety of movements, gestures, ideas even, which do not take a pretty woman out of her sphere; she is still herself; she may chat, laugh, sing, or think.

"There was certainly a feeling for art in the way in which the Countess arranged on a long pine table the myriad-colored petals which were used in composing the flowers she was to produce. The saucers of color were of white china, and always clean, arranged in such order that the eye could at once see the required shade in the scale of tints. Thus the

aristocratic artist saved time. A pretty little cabinet with a hundred tiny drawers, of ebony inlaid with ivory, contained the little steel moulds in which she shaped the leaves and some forms of petals. A fine Japanese bowl held the paste, which was never allowed to turn sour, and it had a fitted cover with a hinge so easy that she could lift it with a finger-tip. The wire, of iron and brass, lurked in a little drawer of the table before her.

"Under her eyes, in a Venetian glass, shaped like a flower-cup on its stem, was the living model she strove to imitate. She had a passion for achievement; she attempted the most difficult things, close racemes, the tiniest corollas, heaths, nectaries, of the most variegated hues. Her hands, as swift as her thoughts, went from the table to the flower she was making, as those of an accomplished pianist fly over the keys. Her fingers seemed to be fairies, to use Perrault's expression, so infinite were the different actions of twisting, fitting, and pressure needed for the work, all hidden under grace of movement, while she adapted each motion to the result with the lucidity of instinct.

"I could not tire of admiring her as she shaped a flower from the materials sorted before her, padding the wire-stem and adjusting the leaves. She displayed the genius of a painter in her bold attempts; she copied faded flowers and yellowing leaves; she struggled even with wild-flowers, the most artless of all, and the most elaborate in their simplicity.

"'This art,' she would say, 'is in its infancy. If the women of Paris had a little of the genius which the slavery of the harem brings out in Oriental women, they would lend a complete language of flowers to the wreaths they wear on their heads. To please my own taste as an artist, I have made drooping flowers with leaves of the hue of Florentine bronze, such as are found before or after the winter. Would not such a crown on the head of a young woman whose life is a failure have a certain poetical fitness? How many things a woman

might express by her head-dress! Are there not flowers for drunken Bacchantes, flowers for gloomy and stern bigots, pensive flowers for women who are bored? Botany, I believe, may be made to express every sensation and thought of the soul, even the most subtle?'

"She would employ me to stamp out the leaves, cut up material, and prepare wires for the stems. My affected desire for occupation soon made me skilful. We talked as we worked. When I had nothing to do, I read new books to her, for I had my part to keep up as a man weary of life, worn out with griefs, gloomy, skeptical, and soured. My person led to adorable banter as to my purely physical resemblance—with the exception of his club-foot—to Lord Byron. It was tacitly acknowledged that her own troubles, as to which she kept the most profound silence, far outweighed mine, though the causes I assigned for my misanthropy might have satisfied Young or Job.

"I will say nothing of the feelings of shame which tormented me as I inflicted on my heart, like the beggars in the street, false wounds to excite the compassion of that enchanting woman. I soon appreciated the extent of my devotedness by learning to estimate the baseness of a spy. The expressions of sympathy bestowed on me would have comforted the greatest grief. This charming creature, weaned from the world, and for so many years alone, having, beside love, treasures of kindliness to bestow, offered these to me with childlike effusiveness and such compassion as would inevitably have filled with bitterness any profligate who should have fallen in love with her; for, alas! it was all charity, all sheer pity. Her renunciation of love, her dread of what is called happiness for women, she proclaimed with equal vehemence and candor. These happy days proved to me that a woman's friendship is far superior to her love.

"I suffered the revelations of my sorrows to be dragged from me with as many grimaces as a young lady allows herself

before sitting down to the piano, so conscious are they of the annoyance that will follow. As you may imagine, the necessity for overcoming my dislike to speak had induced the Countess to strengthen the bonds of our intimacy; but she found in me so exact a counterpart of her own antipathy to love that I fancied she was well content with the chance which had brought to her desert island a sort of Man Friday. Solitude was, perhaps, beginning to weigh on her. At the same time there was nothing of the coquette in her; nothing survived of the woman; she did not feel that she had a heart, she told me, excepting in the ideal world where she found refuge. I involuntarily compared these two lives—hers and the Count's: his, all activity, agitation, and emotion; hers, all inaction, quiescence, and stagnation. The woman and the man were admirably obedient to their nature. My misanthropy allowed me to utter cynical sallies against men and women both, and I indulged in them, hoping to bring Honorine to the confidential point; but she was not to be caught in any trap, and I began to understand that mulish obstinacy which is commoner among women than is generally supposed.

"'The Orientals are right,' I said to her one evening, 'when they shut you up and regard you merely as the playthings of their pleasure. Europe has been well punished for having admitted you to form an element of society and for accepting you on an equal footing. In my opinion, woman is the most dishonorable and cowardly being to be found. Nay, and that is where her charm lies. Where would be the pleasure of hunting a tame thing? When once a woman has inspired a man's passion, she is to him for ever sacred; in his eyes she is hedged round by an imprescriptible prerogative. In men gratitude for past delights is eternal. Though he should find his mistress grown old or unworthy, the woman still has rights over his heart; but to you women the man you have loved is as nothing to you; nay, more, he is

unpardonable in one thing—he lives on! You dare not own it, but you all have in your hearts the feeling which that popular calumny called tradition ascribes to the Lady of the Tour de Nesle: "What a pity it is that we cannot live on love as we live on fruit, and that, when we have had our fill, nothing should survive but the remembrance of pleasure!"'

"'God has, no doubt, reserved such perfect bliss for paradise,' said she. 'But,' she added, 'if your argument seems to you very witty, to me it has the disadvantage of being false. What can those women be who give themselves up to a succession of loves?' she asked, looking at me as the Virgin in Ingres' picture looks at Louis XIII. offering her his kingdom.

"'You are an actress in good faith,' said I, 'for you gave me a look just now which would make the fame of an actress. Still, lovely as you are, you have loved; *ergo*, you forget.'

"'I!' she exclaimed, evading my question, 'I am not a woman. I am a nun, and seventy-two years old!'

"'Then, how can you so positively assert that you feel more keenly than I? Sorrow has but one form for women. The only misfortunes they regard are disappointments of the heart.'

"She looked at me sweetly, and, like all women when stuck between the issues of a dilemma or held in the clutches of truth, she persisted, nevertheless, in her willfulness.

"'I am a nun,' she said, 'and you talk to me of a world where I shall never again set foot.'

"'Not even in thought?' said I.

"'Is the world so much to be desired?' she replied. 'Oh! when my mind wanders, it goes higher. The angel of perfection, the beautiful angel Gabriel, often sings in my heart. If I were rich, I should work all the same, to keep me from soaring too often on the many-tinted wings of the angel, and wandering in the world of fancy. There are meditations which are the ruin of us women! I owe much

peace of mind to my flowers, though sometimes they fail to occupy me. On some days I find my soul invaded by a purposeless expectancy; I cannot banish some idea which takes possession of me, which seems to make my fingers clumsy. I feel that some great event is impending, that my life is about to change; I listen vaguely, I stare into the darkness, I have no liking for my work, and after a thousand fatigues I find life once more—every-day life. Is this a warning from heaven? I ask myself——'

"After three months of this struggle between two diplomatists, concealed under the semblance of youthful melancholy, and a woman whose disgust of life made her invulnerable, I told the Count that it was impossible to drag this tortoise out of her shell; it must be broken. The evening before, in our last quite friendly discussion, the Countess had exclaimed—

"'Lucretia's dagger wrote in letters of blood the watchword of woman's charter: "*Liberty!*"'

"From that moment the Count left me free to act.

"'I have been paid a hundred francs for the flowers and caps I made this week!' Honorine exclaimed gleefully one Saturday evening when I went to visit her in the little sitting-room on the ground floor, which the unavowed proprietor had had regilt.

"It was ten o'clock. The twilight of July and a glorious moon lent us their misty light. Gusts of mingled perfumes soothed the soul; the Countess was clinking in her hand the five gold-pieces given to her by a supposititious dealer in fashionable frippery, another of Octave's accomplices found for him by a judge, M. Popinot.

"'I earn my living by amusing myself,' she said; 'I am free, when men, armed with their laws, have tried to make us slaves. Oh, I have transports of pride every Saturday! In short, I like Monsieur Gaudissart's gold-pieces as much as Lord Byron, your double, liked Mr. Murray's.'

"'This is not in the least becoming in a woman,' said I.

"'Pooh! Am I a woman? I am a boy gifted with a soft soul, that is all; a boy whom no woman can ever torture——'

"'Your life is the negation of your whole being,' I replied. 'What? You, on whom the good God has lavished His choicest treasures of love and beauty, do you never wish——'

"'For what?' said she, somewhat disturbed by a speech which, for the first time, gave the lie to the part I had assumed.

"'For a pretty little child with curling hair, running, playing among the flowers, like a flower itself of life and love, and calling you mother!'

"I waited for an answer. A too-prolonged silence led me to perceive the terrible effect of my words, though the darkness at first concealed it. Leaning on her sofa, the Countess had not indeed fainted, but frozen under a nervous attack of which the first chill, as gentle as everything that was part of her, felt, as she afterward said, like the influence of a most insidious poison. I called Madame Gobain, who came and led away her mistress, laid her on her bed, unlaced her, undressed her, and restored her, not to life, it is true, but to the consciousness of some dreadful suffering. I meanwhile walked up and down the path behind the house, weeping, and doubting my success. I only wished to give up this part of the bird-catcher which I had so rashly assumed. Madame Gobain, who came down and found me with my face wet with tears, hastily went upstairs and into the bedroom again to say to the Countess——

"'What has happened, madame? Monsieur Maurice is crying like a child.'

"Roused to action by the evil interpretation that might be put on our mutual behavior, she summoned superhuman strength to put on a wrapper and come down to me.

"'You are not the cause of this attack,' said she. 'I am subject to these spasms, a sort of cramp of the heart——'

"'And you will not tell me of your troubles?' I asked, in a voice which cannot be affected, as I wiped away my tears. 'Have you not just now told me that you have been a mother, and have been so unhappy as to lose your child?'

"'Marie!' she called as she rang the bell. Gobain came in.

"'Bring lights and some tea,' said she, with the calm decision of a 'mylady' clothed in the armor of pride by the dreadful English training which you know too well.

"When the housekeeper had lighted the tapers and closed the shutters, the Countess showed me a mute countenance; her indomitable pride and gravity, worthy of a savage, had already asserted their mastery. She said—

"'Do you know why I like Lord Byron so much? It is because he suffered as animals do. Of what use are complaints when they are not an elegy like Manfred's, nor bitter mockery like Don Juan's, nor a reverie like Childe Harold's? Nothing shall be known of me. My heart is a poem that I lay before God.'

"'If I chose——' said I.

"'If?' she repeated.

"'I have no interest in anything,' I replied, 'so I cannot be inquisitive; but, if I chose, I could know all your secrets by to-morrow.'

"'I defy you!' she exclaimed, with ill-disguised uneasiness.

"'Seriously?'

"'Certainly,' said she, tossing her head. 'If such a crime is possible, I ought to know it.'

"'In the first place, madame,' I went on, pointing to her hands, 'those pretty fingers, which are enough to show that you are not a mere girl—were they made for toil? Then you call yourself Madame Gobain, you, who, in my presence the other day on receiving a letter, said to Marie: "Here, this is

for you?'' Marie is the real Madame Gobain; so you conceal your name behind that of your housekeeper. Fear nothing, madame, from me. You have in me the most devoted friend you will ever have: Friend, do you understand me? I give this word its sacred and pathetic meaning, so profaned in France, where we apply it to our enemies. And your friend, who will defend you against everything, only wishes that you should be as happy as such a woman ought to be. Who can tell whether the pain I have involuntarily caused you was not a voluntary act?'

"'Yes,' replied she with threatening audacity, 'I insist on it. Be curious, and tell me all that you can find out about me; but,' and she held up her finger, 'you must also tell me by what means you obtain your information. The preservation of the small happiness I enjoy here depends on the steps you take.'

"'That means that you will fly——'

"'On wings!' she cried, 'to the New World——'

"'Where you will be at the mercy of the brutal passions you will inspire,' said I, interrupting her. 'Is it not the very essence of genius and beauty to shine, to attract men's gaze, to excite desires and evil thoughts? Paris is a desert with Bedouins; Paris is the only place in the world where those who must work for their livelihood can hide their life. What have you to complain of? Who am I? An additional servant—M. Gobain, that is all. If you have to fight a duel, you may need a second.'

"'Never mind; find out whom I am. I have already said that I insist. Nay, I beg that you will,' she went on, with the grace which you ladies have at command,'' said the consul, looking at the ladies.

"'Well, then, to-morrow, at the same hour, I will tell you what I may have discovered,' replied I. 'But do not therefore hate me! Will you behave like other women?'

"'What do other women do?'

"'They lay upon us immense sacrifices, and when we have made them, they reproach us for it some time later as if it were an injury.'

"'They are right if the thing required appears to be a sacrifice!' replied she pointedly.

"'Instead of sacrifices, say efforts and——'

"'It would be an impertinence,' she said.

"'Forgive me,' I replied. 'I forgot that woman and the pope are infallible.'

"'Good heavens!' she went on, after a long pause, 'only two words would be enough to destroy the peace so dearly bought, and which I enjoy like a fraud——'

"She arose and paid no further heed to me.

"'Where can I go?' she asked. 'What is to become of me? Must I leave this quiet retreat that I had arranged with such care to end my days in?'

"'To end your days!' exclaimed I with visible alarm. 'Has it never struck you that a time would come when you could no longer work, when competition will lower the price of flowers and articles of fashion——?'

"'I have already saved a thousand crowns,' she returned.

"'Heavens! what privations must such a sum represent!' I exclaimed.

"'Leave me,' she said, 'till to-morrow. This evening I am not myself; I must be alone. Must I not save my strength in case of disaster? For, if you should learn anything, others beside you would be informed, and then—Good-night,' she added shortly, dismissing me with an imperious gesture.

"'The battle is to-morrow, then,' I replied with a smile, to keep up the appearance of indifference I had given to the scene. But as I went down the avenue I repeated the words—

"'The battle is to-morrow.'

"Octave's anxiety was equal to Honorine's. The Count and I remained together until two in the morning, walking back and forth by the trenches of the bastile, like two generals

who, on the eve of a battle, calculate all the chances, examine the ground, and perceive that the victory must depend on an opportunity to be seized half-way through the fight. These two divided beings would each lie awake, one in the hope, the other in the agonizing dread of reunion. The real dramas of life are not in circumstances, but in feelings; they are played in the heart, or, if you please, in that vast realm which we ought to call the spiritual world. Octave and Honorine moved and lived altogether in the world of lofty spirits.

"I was punctual. At ten next evening I was, for the first time, shown into a charming bedroom furnished with white and blue—the nest of this wounded dove. The Countess looked at me and was about to speak, but was stricken dumb by my respectful demeanor.

"'Madame la Comtesse,' said I with a grave smile.

"The poor woman, who had risen, dropped back into her chair and remained there, sunk in an attitude of grief, which I should have liked to see perpetuated by a great painter.

"'You are,' I went on, 'the wife of the noblest and most highly respected of men; of a man who is acknowledged to be great, but who is far greater in his conduct to you than he is in the eyes of the world. You and he are two lofty natures. Where do you suppose yourself to be living?' I asked her.

"'In my own house, she replied,' opening her eyes with a wide stare of astonishment.

"'In Count Octave's,' I replied. 'You have been tricked. M. Lenormand, the usher of the court, is not the real owner; he is only a screen for your husband. The delightful seclusion you enjoy is the Count's work, the money you earn is paid by him, and his protection extends to the most trivial details of your existence. Your husband has saved you in the eyes of the world; he has assigned plausible reasons for your disappearance; he professes to hope that you were not lost in the wreck of the "Cécile," the ship in which you sailed for Havana to secure the fortune to be left to you by an old aunt, who

might have forgotten you; you embarked, escorted by two ladies of her family and an old manservant. The Count says that he has sent agents to various spots, and received letters which give him great hopes. He takes as many precautions to hide you from all eyes as you take yourself. In short, he obeys you——'

"'That is enough,' she said. 'I want to know but one thing more. From whom have you obtained all these details?'

"'Well, madame, my uncle got a place for a penniless youth as secretary to the commissary of police in this part of Paris. That young man told me everything. If you leave this house this evening, however stealthily, your husband will know where you are gone and his care will follow you everywhere. How could a woman so clever as you are believe that shopkeepers buy flowers and caps as dear as they sell them? Ask a thousand crowns for a bouquet, and you will get it. No mother's tenderness was ever more ingenious than your husband's! I have learned from the porter of this house that the Count often comes behind the fence when all are asleep, to see the glimmer of your night-light. Your large cashmere shawl cost six thousand francs—your old-clothes-seller brings you, as second hand, things fresh from the best makers. In short, you are living here like Venus in the toils of Vulcan; but you are alone in your prison by the devices of a sublime magnanimity, sublime for seven years past, and at every hour.'

"The Countess was trembling as a trapped swallow trembles while, as you hold it in your hand, it strains its neck to look about it with wild eyes. She shook with a nervous spasm, studying me with a defiant look. Her dry eyes glittered with a light that was almost hot: still, she was a woman! The moment came when her tears forced their way, and she wept—not because she was touched, but because she was helpless; they were tears of desperation. She had believed herself independent and free; marriage weighed on her as the prison cell does on the captive.

"'I will go!' she cried through her tears. 'He forces me to it; I will go where no one certainly will come after me.'

"'What,' I said, 'you would kill yourself? Madame, you must have some very powerful reasons for not wishing to return to Comte Octave.'

"'Certainly I have!'

"'Well, then, tell them to me; tell them to my uncle. In us you will find two devoted advisers. Though in the confessional my uncle is a priest, he is never one in a drawing-room. We will hear you; we will try to find a solution of the problems you may lay before us; and if you are the dupe or the victim of some misapprehension, perhaps we can clear the matter up. Your soul, I believe, is pure; but if you have done wrong, your fault is fully expiated—— At any rate, remember that in me you have a most sincere friend. If you should wish to evade the Count's tyranny, I will find you the means; he shall never find you.'

"'Oh! there is always a convent!' said she.

"'Yes. But the Count, as minister of state, can procure your rejection by every convent in the world. Even though he is powerful, I will save you from him; but—only when you have demonstrated to me that you cannot and ought not to return to him. Oh! do not fear that you would escape his power only to fall into mine,' I added, noticing a glance of horrible suspicion, full of exaggerated dignity. 'You shall have peace, solitude, and independence; in short, you shall be as free and as little annoyed as if you were an ugly, cross old maid. I myself would never be able to see you without your consent.'

"'And how? By what means?'

"'That is my secret. I am not deceiving you, of that you may be sure. Prove to me that this is the only life you can lead, that it is preferable to that of the Comtesse Octave, rich, admired, in one of the finest houses in Paris, beloved

by her husband, a happy mother—— and I will decide in your favor.'

"'But,' said she, 'will there never be a man who understands me?'

"'No. And that is why I appeal to religion to decide between us. The curé of the white friars is a saint, seventy-five years of age. My uncle is not a grand inquisitor, he is a Saint John; but for you he will be Fénelon—the Fénelon who said to the Duc de Bourgogne: "Eat a calf on a Friday by all means, monseigneur. But be a Christian."'

"'Nay, nay, monsieur, the convent is my last hope and my only refuge. There is none but God who can understand me. No man, not Saint Augustine himself, the tenderest of the fathers of the church, could enter into the scruples of my conscience, which are to me as the circles of Dante's hell, whence there is no escape. Another than my husband, a different man, however unworthy of the offering, has had all my love. No, he has not had it, for he did not take it; I gave it him as a mother gives her child a wonderful toy, which it breaks. For me there never could be two loves. In some natures love can never be on trial; it is, or it is not. When it comes, when it rises up, it is complete. Well, that life of eighteen months was to me a life of eighteen years; I threw into it all the faculties of my being, which were not impoverished by their effusiveness; they were exhausted by that delusive intimacy in which I alone was genuine. For me the cup of happiness is not drained, nor empty; and nothing can refill it, for it is broken. I am out of the fray; I have no weapons left. Having thus utterly abandoned myself, what am I?—the leavings of a feast. I had but one name bestowed on me, Honorine, as I had but one heart. My husband had the young girl, a worthless lover had the woman—there is nothing left! Then let myself be loved! that is the great idea that you mean to utter to me. Oh! but I still am something, and I rebel at the idea of being a prostitute! Yes, by the

light of the conflagration I saw clearly; and I tell you—well, I could imagine surrendering to another man's love, but to Octave's? No, never.'

"'Ah! you love him,' I said.

"'I esteem him, respect him, venerate him; he has never done me the smallest hurt; he is kind, he is tender; but I can never more love him. However,' she went on, 'let us talk no more of this. Discussion makes everything small. I will express my notions on this subject in writing to you, for at this moment they are suffocating me; I am feverish, my feet are standing in the ashes of my paraclete. All that I see, these things which I believed I had earned by my labor, now remind me of everything I wish to forget. Ah! I must fly from hence as I fled from my home.'

"'Where will you go?' I asked. 'Can a woman exist unprotected? At thirty, in all the glory of your beauty, rich in powers of which you have no suspicion, full of tenderness to be bestowed, are you prepared to live in the wilderness where I could hide you? Be quite easy. The Count, who for nine years has never allowed himself to be seen here, will never go there without your permission. You have his sublime devotion of nine years as a guarantee for your tranquillity. You may therefore discuss the future in perfect confidence with my uncle and me. My uncle has as much influence as a minister of state. So compose yourself; do not exaggerate your misfortune. A priest whose hair has grown white in the exercise of his functions is not a boy; you will be understood by him to whom every passion has been confided for nearly fifty years now, and who weighs in his hands the ponderous heart of kings and princes. If he is stern under his stole, in the presence of your flowers he will be as tender as they are, and as indulgent as his Divine Master.'

"I left the Countess at midnight; she was apparently calm, but depressed, and had some secret purpose which no perspicacity could guess. I found the Count a few paces off,

in the Rue Saint-Maur. Drawn by an irresistible attraction he had quitted the spot on the boulevards where we had agreed to meet.

"'What a night my poor child will go through!' he exclaimed, when I had finished my account of the scene that had just taken place. 'Supposing I were to go to her?' he added; 'supposing she were to see me suddenly?'

"'At this moment she is capable of throwing herself out of the window,' I replied. 'The Countess is one of those Lucretias who could not survive any violence, even if it were done by a man into whose arms she could throw herself.'

"'You are young,' he answered; 'you do not know that in a soul tossed by such dreadful alternatives the will is like the waters of a lake lashed by a tempest; the wind changes every instant, and the waves are driven now to one shore, now to the other. During this night the chances are quite as great that on seeing me Honorine might rush into my arms as that she should throw herself out of the window.'

"'And you would accept the equal chances?' said I interrogatively.

"'Well, come,' said he, 'I have at home, to enable me to wait until to-morrow, a dose of opium which Desplein prepared for me to send me to sleep without any risk!'

"Next day at noon Gobain brought me a letter, telling me that the Countess had gone to bed at six, worn out with fatigue, and that, having taken a soothing draught prepared by the chemist, she had now fallen asleep.

"This is her letter, of which I kept a copy—for you, mademoiselle," said the consul, addressing Camille, "know all the resources of art, the tricks of style, and the efforts made in their compositions by writers who do not lack skill; but you will acknowledge that literature could never find such language in its assumed pathos; there is nothing so terrible as truth. Here is the letter written by this woman, or rather by this anguish:

"'MONSIEUR MAURICE:—I know all your uncle could say to me; he is not better informed than my own conscience. Conscience is the interpreter of God to man. I know that if I am not reconciled to Octave, I shall be damned; that is the sentence of religious law. Civil law condemns me to obey, cost what it may. If my husband does not reject me, the world will regard me as pure, as virtuous, whatever I may have done. Yes, that much is sublime in marriage: society ratifies the husband's forgiveness; but it forgets that the forgiveness must be accepted. Legally, religiously, and from the world's point of view I ought to go back to Octave. Keeping only to the human aspect of the question, is it not cruel to refuse him happiness, to deprive him of children, to wipe his name out of the "Golden Book" and the list of peers? My sufferings, my repugnance, my feelings, all my egoism—for I know that I am an egoist—ought to be sacrificed to the family. I shall be a mother; the caresses of my child will wipe away many tears! I shall be very happy; I certainly shall be much looked up to. I shall ride, haughty and wealthy, in a handsome carriage! I shall have servants and a fine house, and be the queen of as many parties as there are weeks in the year. The world will receive me handsomely. I shall not have to climb up again to the heaven of aristocracy, I shall never have come down from it. So God, the law, society are all in accord.

"'"What are you rebelling against?" I am asked from the height of heaven, from the pulpit, from the judge's bench, and from the throne, whose august intervention may at need be invoked by the court. Your uncle, indeed, at need, would speak to me of a certain celestial grace which will flood my heart when I know the pleasure of doing my duty.

"'God, the law, the world, and Octave all wish me to live, no doubt. Well, if there is no other difficulty, my reply cuts the knot: I will not live. I will become quite white and innocent again; for I will lie in my shroud, white with the

blameless pallor of death. This is not in the least "mulish obstinacy." That mulish obstinacy of which you jestingly accused me is in a woman the result of confidence, of a vision of the future. Though my husband, sublimely generous, may forget all, I shall not forget. Does forgetfulness depend on our will? When a widow remarries, love makes a girl of her; she marries a man she loves. But I cannot love the Count. It all lies in that, do you not see?

"'Every time my eyes met his I should see my sin in them, even when his were full of love. The greatness of his generosity would be the measure of the greatness of my crime. My eyes, always uneasy, would be for ever reading an invisible condemnation. My heart would be full of confused and struggling memories; marriage can never move me to the cruel rapture, the mortal delirium of passion. I should kill my husband by my coldness, by comparisons with which he would guess, though hidden in the depths of my conscience. Oh! on the day when I should read a trace of involuntary, even of suppressed reproach in a furrow on his brow, in a saddened look, in some imperceptible gesture, nothing could hold me: I should be lying with a fractured skull on the pavement, and find that less hard than my husband. It might be my own over-susceptibility that would lead me to this horrible but welcome death; I might die the victim of an impatient mood in Octave caused by some matter of business, or be deceived by some unjust suspicion. Alas! I might even mistake some proof of love for a sign of contempt!

"'What torture on both sides! Octave would be always doubting me, I doubting him. I, quite involuntarily, should give him a rival wholly unworthy of him, a man whom I despise, but with whom I have known raptures branded on me with fire, which are my shame, but which I cannot forget.

"'Have I shown you enough of my heart? No one, monsieur, can convince me that love may be renewed, for I neither can nor will accept love from any one. A young bride

is like a plucked flower; but a guilty wife is like a flower that has been walked over. You, who are a florist, you know whether it is ever possible to restore the broken stem, to revive the faded colors, to make the sap flow again in the tender vessels of which the whole vegetative function lies in their perfect rigidity. If some botanist should attempt the operation, could his genius smooth out the folds of the bruised corolla? If he could remake a flower, he would be God. God alone can remake me! I am drinking the bitter cup of expiation; but as I drink it I painfully spell out this sentence: Expiation is not annihilation.

"'In my little house, alone, I eat my bread soaked in tears; but no one sees me eat nor sees me weep. If I go back to Octave, I must give up my tears—they would offend him. Oh! monsieur, how many virtues must a woman tread under foot, not to give herself, but to restore herself to a betrayed husband? Who could count them? God alone; for He alone can know and encourage the horrible refinements at which the angels must turn pale. Nay, I will go further. A woman has courage in the presence of her husband if he knows nothing; she shows a sort of fierce strength in her hypocrisy; she deceives him to secure him double happiness. But common knowledge is surely degrading. Supposing I could exchange humiliation for ecstasy? Would not Octave at last feel that my consent was sheer depravity? Marriage is based on esteem, on sacrifices on both sides; but neither Octave nor I could esteem each other the day after our reunion. He would have disgraced me by a love like that of an old man for a courtesan, and I should for ever feel the shame of being a chattel instead of a lady. I should represent pleasure, and not virtue, in his house. These are the bitter fruits of such a sin. I have made myself a bed of anguish upon which I can only toss on burning coals, a sleepless pillow.

"'Here, when I suffer, I bless my sufferings; I say to God,

"I thank Thee!" But in my husband's house I should be full of terror, tasting joys to which I have no right.

"'All this, monsieur, is not argument; it is the feeling of a soul made vast and hollow by seven years of suffering. Finally, must I make a horrible confession? I shall always feel at my bosom the lips of a child conceived in rapture and joy, and in the belief in happiness, of a child I nursed for seven months, that I shall bear in my womb all the days of my life. If other children should draw their nourishment from me, they would drink in tears mingling with the milk and turning it sour. I seem a light thing, you regard me as a child—Ah yes! I have a child's memory, the memory which returns to us on the verge of the tomb. So, you see, there is not a situation in that beautiful life to which the world and my husband's love want to recall me, which is not a false position, which does not cover a snare or reveal a precipice down which I must fall, torn by pitiless rocks. For five years now I have been wandering in the sandy desert of the future without finding a place convenient to repent in, because my soul is possessed by true repentance.

"'Religion has its answers ready to all this, and I know them by heart. This suffering, these difficulties, are my punishment, she says, and God will give me strength to endure them. This, monsieur, is an argument to certain pious souls gifted with an energy which I have not. I have made my choice between this hell, where God does not forbid my blessing Him, and the hell that awaits me under Count Octave's roof.

"'One word more. If I were still a girl, with the experience I now have, my husband is the man I should choose; but that is the very reason of my refusal. I could not bear to blush before that man. What! I should be always on my knees, he always standing upright; and if we were to exchange positions, I should scorn him! I will not be better treated by him in consequence of my sin. The angel who

might venture under such circumstances on certain liberties, which are permissible when both are equally blameless, is not on earth; he dwells in heaven! Octave is full of delicate feeling, I know; but even in his soul (which, however generous, is a man's soul after all) there is no guarantee for the new life I should lead with him.

"'Come, then, and tell me where I may find the solitude, the peace, the silence, so kindly to irreparable woes, which you promised me.'

"After making this copy of the letter to preserve it complete, I went to the Rue Payenne. Anxiety had conquered the power of opium. Octave was walking up and down his garden like a madman.

"'Answer that!' said I, giving him his wife's letter. 'Try to reassure the modesty of experience. It is rather more difficult than conquering the modesty of ignorance, which curiosity helps to betray.'

"'She is mine!' cried the Count, whose face expressed joy as he went on reading the letter.

"He signed to me with his hand to leave him to himself. I understood that extreme happiness and extreme pain obey the same laws: I went in to receive Madame de Courteville and Amélie, who were to dine with the Count that day. However handsome Mademoiselle de Courteville might be, I felt, on seeing her once more, that love has three aspects, and that the women who can inspire us with perfect love are very rare. As I involuntarily compared Amélie with Honorine, I found the erring wife more attractive than the pure girl. To Honorine's heart fidelity had not been a duty, but the inevitable; while Amélie would serenely pronounce the most solemn promises without knowing their purport or to what they bound her. The crushed, the dead woman, so to speak, the sinner to be reinstated, seemed to me sublime; she incited the special generosities of a man's nature; she

demanded all the treasures of the heart, all the resources of strength; she filled his life and gave the zest of a conflict to happiness; whereas Amélie, chaste and confiding, would settle down into the sphere of peaceful motherhood, where the commonplace must be its poetry, and where my mind would find no struggle and no victory.

"Of the plains of Champagne and the snowy, storm-beaten but sublime Alps, what young man would choose the chalky, monotonous level? No; such comparisons are fatal and wrong on the threshold of the mairie. Alas! only the experience of life can teach us that marriage excludes passion, that a family cannot have its foundation on the tempests of love. After having dreamed of impossible love, with its infinite caprices, after having tasted the tormenting delights of the ideal, I saw before me modest reality. Pity me, for what could be expected! At twenty-five I did not trust myself; but I took a manly resolution.

"I went back to the Count to announce the arrival of his relations, and I saw him grown young again in the reflected light of hope.

"'What ails you, Maurice?' said he, struck by my changed expression.

"'Monsieur le Comte——'

"'No longer Octave? You, to whom I shall owe my life, my happiness——'

"'My dear Octave, if you should succeed in bringing the Countess back to her duty, I have studied her well'—(he looked at me as Othello must have looked at Iago when Iago first contrived to insinuate a suspicion into the Moor's mind)—'she must never see me again; she must never know that Maurice was your secretary. Never mention my name to her, or all will be undone—— You have gotten me an appointment as maître des requêtes*—well, get me instead some diplomatic post abroad, a consulship, and do not think of my

* Chief of Requests (a Court Judge).

marrying Amélie. Oh! do not be uneasy,' I added, seeing him draw himself up, 'I will play my part to the end.'

"'Poor boy!' said he, taking my hand, which he pressed, while he kept back the tears that were starting to his eyes.

"'You gave me gloves,' I said, laughing, 'but I have not put them on; that is all.'

"We then agreed as to what I was to do that evening at Honorine's house, whither I presently returned. It was now August; the day had been hot and stormy, but the storm hung overhead, the sky was like copper; the scent of the flowers was heavy, I felt as if I were in an oven, and caught myself wishing that the Countess might have set out for the Indies; but she was sitting on a wooden bench shaped like a sofa, under an arbor, in a loose dress of white muslin fastened with blue bows, her hair unadorned in waving bands over her cheeks, her feet on a small wooden stool, and showing a little way beyond her skirt. She did not rise; she showed me with her hand to the seat by her side, saying—

"'Now, is not life at a deadlock for me?'

"'Life as you have made it,' I replied. 'But not the life I propose to make for you; for, if you choose, you may be very happy——'

"'How?' said she; her whole person was a question.

"'Your letter is in the Count's hands.'

"Honorine started like a frightened doe, sprang to a few paces off, walked down the garden, turned about, remained standing for some minutes, and finally went in to sit alone in the drawing-room, where I joined her, after giving her time to get accustomed to the pain of this poniard thrust.

"'You—a friend? Say rather a traitor! A spy, perhaps, sent by my husband.'

"Instinct in women is as strong as the perspicacity of great men.

"'You wanted an answer to your letter, did you not? And there was but one man in the world who could write it. You

must read the reply, my dear Countess; and if after reading it you still find that your life is a deadlock, the spy will prove himself a friend; I will place you in a convent whence the Count's power cannot drag you. But, before going there, let us consider the other side of the question. There is a law, alike divine and human, which even hatred affects to obey, and which commands us not to condemn the accused without hearing his defense. Till now you have passed condemnation, as children do, with your ears stopped. The devotion of seven years has its claims. So you must read the answer your husband will send you. I have forwarded to him, through my uncle, a copy of your letter, and my uncle asked him what his reply would be if his wife wrote him a letter in such terms. Thus you are not compromised. He will himself bring the Count's answer. In the presence of that saintly man, and in mine, out of respect for your own dignity, you must read it, or you will be no better than a willful, passionate child. You must make this sacrifice to the world, to the law, and to God.'

"As she saw in this concession no attack on her womanly resolve, she consented. All the labor of four or five months had been building up to this moment. But do not the pyramids end in a point on which a bird may perch? The Count had set all his hopes on this supreme instant, and he had reached it.

"In all my life I remember nothing more formidable than my uncle's entrance into that little pompadour drawing-room, at ten that evening. The fine head with its silver hair thrown into relief by the entirely black dress, and the divinely calm face, had a magical effect on the Comtesse Honorine; she had the feeling of cool balm on her wounds, and beamed in the reflection of that virtue which gave light without knowing it.

"'Monsieur the Curé of the White Friars,' said old Gobain.

"'Are you come, uncle, with a message of happiness and peace?' said I.

"'Happiness and peace are always to be found in obedience to the precepts of the church,' replied my uncle, and he handed the Countess the following letter:

"'My dear Honorine:—If you had but done me the favor of trusting me, if you had read the letter I wrote to you five years since, you would have spared yourself five years of useless labor and of privations which have grieved me deeply. In it I proposed an arrangement of which the stipulations will relieve all your fears, and make our domestic life possible. I have much to reproach myself with, and in seven years of sorrow I have discovered all my errors. I misunderstood marriage. I failed to scent danger when it threatened you. An angel was in my house. The Lord bade me guard it well! The Lord has punished me for my audacious confidence.

"'You cannot give yourself a single lash without striking me. Have mercy on me, my dear Honorine. I so fully appreciated your susceptibilities that I would not bring you back to the old house in the Rue Payenne, where I can live without you, but which I could not bear to see again with you. I am decorating, with great pleasure, another house, in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, to which, in hope, I conduct not a wife whom I owe to her ignorance of life, and secured to me by law, but a sister who will allow me to press on her brow such a kiss as a father gives the daughter he blesses every day.

"'Will you bereave me of the right I have conquered from your despair—that of watching more closely over your needs, your pleasures, your life even? Women have one heart always on their side, always abounding in excuses—their mother's; you never knew any mother but my mother, who would have brought you back to me. But how is it that you never guessed that I had for you the heart of a mother, both of my mother

and of your own? Yes, dear, my affection is neither mean nor grasping; it is one of those which will never let any annoyance last long enough to pucker the brow of the child it worships. What can you think of the companion of your childhood, Honorine, if you believe him capable of accepting kisses given in trembling, of living between delight and anxiety? Do not fear that you will be exposed to the laments of a suppliant passion; I would not want you back until I felt certain of my own strength to leave you in perfect freedom.

"'Your solitary pride has exaggerated the difficulties. You may, if you will, look on at the life of a brother, or of a father, without either suffering or joy; but you will find neither mockery nor indifference, nor have any doubt as to his intentions. The warmth of the atmosphere in which you live will be always equable and genial, without tempests, without a possible squall. If, later, when you feel secure that you are as much at home as in your own little house, you desire to try some other elements of happiness, pleasures, or amusements, you can expand their circle at your will. The tenderness of a mother knows neither contempt nor pity. What is it? Love without desire. Well, in me admiration shall hide every sentiment in which you might see an offense.

"'Thus, living side by side, we may both be magnanimous. In you the kindness of a sister, the affectionate thoughtfulness of a friend, will satisfy the ambition of him who wishes to be your life's companion; and you may measure his tenderness by the care he will take to conceal it. Neither you nor I will be jealous of the past, for we may each acknowledge that the other has sense enough to look only straightforward.

"'Thus you will be at home in your new house exactly as you are in the Rue Saint-Maur; unapproachable, alone, occupied as you please, living by your own law; but having in addition the legitimate protection, of which you are now exacting the most chivalrous labors of love, with the consideration which lends so much lustre to a woman, and the

fortune which will allow of your doing many good works. Honorine, when you long for an unnecessary absolution, you have only to ask for it; it will not be forced upon you by the church or by the law; it will wait on your pride, on your own impulsion. My wife might indeed have to fear all the things you dread; but not my friend and sister, toward whom I am bound to show every form and refinement of politeness. To see you happy is enough happiness for me; I have proved this for these seven years past. The guarantee for this, Honorine, is to be seen in all the flowers made by you, carefully preserved, and watered by my tears. Like the *quipos*, the tally cords of the Peruvians, they are the record of our sorrows.

"'If this secret compact does not suit you, my child, I have begged the saintly man who takes charge of this letter not to say a word in my behalf. I will not owe your return to the terrors threatened by the church, nor to the bidding of the law. I will not accept the simple and quiet happiness that I ask from any one but yourself. If you persist in condemning me to the lonely life, bereft even of a fraternal smile, which I have led for nine years, if you remain in your solitude and show no sign, my will yields to yours. Understand me perfectly: you shall be no more troubled than you have been until this day. I will get rid of the crazy fellow who has meddled in your concerns and has, perhaps, caused you some annoyance——'

"'Monsieur,' said Honorine, folding up the letter, which she placed in her bosom, and looking at my uncle, 'thank you very much. I will avail myself of Monsieur le Comte's permission to remain here——'

"'Ah!' I exclaimed.

"This exclamation made my uncle look at me uneasily, and won from the Countess a mischievous glance which enlightened me as to her motives.

"Honorine had wanted to ascertain whether I was an actor, a bird-snarer; and I had the melancholy satisfaction of deceiving her by my exclamation, which was one of those cries from the heart which women understand so well.

"'Ah, Maurice,' said she, 'you know how to love.'

"The light that flashed in my eyes was another reply which would have dissipated the Countess' uneasiness if she still had any. Thus the Count found me useful to the very last.

"Honorine then took out the Count's letter again to finish reading it. My uncle signed to me, and I arose.

"'Let us leave the Countess,' said he.

"'You are going already, Maurice?' she said, without looking at me.

"She arose, and still reading, followed us to the door. On the threshold she took my hand, pressed it very affectionately, and said, 'We shall meet again——'

"'No,' I replied, wringing her hand, so that she cried out. 'You love your husband. I leave to-morrow.'

"And I rushed away, leaving my uncle, of whom she asked:

"'Why, what is the matter with your nephew?'

"The good Abbé completed my work by pointing to his head and heart, as much as to say, 'He is mad, madame; you must forgive him!' and with all the more truth, because he really thought it.

"Six days after I set out with an appointment as vice-consul in Spain, in a large commercial town, where I could quickly qualify to rise in the career of a consul, to which I now restricted my ambition. After I had established myself there, I received this letter from the Count:

"'My dear Maurice:—If I were happy, I should not write to you, but I have entered on a new life of suffering. I have grown young again in my desires, with all the impatience of a man of forty and the prudence of a diplomatist, who has learned to moderate his passion. When you left I had

not yet been admitted to the pavilion in the Rue Saint-Maur, but a letter had promised me that I should have permission—the mild and melancholy letter of a woman who dreaded the agitations of a meeting. After waiting for more than a month, I made bold to call, and desired Gobain to inquire whether I could be received. I sat down in a chair in the avenue near the lodge, my head buried in my hands, and there I remained for almost an hour.

"'"Madame had to dress," said Gobain, to hide Honorine's hesitancy under a pride of appearance which was flattering to me.

"'During a long quarter of an hour we both of us were possessed by an involuntary nervous trembling as great as that which seizes a speaker on the platform, and we spoke to each other in scared phrases like those of persons taken by surprise who "make believe" a conversation.

"'"You see, Honorine," said I, my eyes full of tears, "the ice is broken, and I am so tremulous with happiness that you must forgive the incoherency of my language. It will be so for a long time yet."

"'"There is no crime in being in love with your wife," she returned with a forced smile.

"'"Do me the favor," said I, "no longer to work as you do. I have heard from Madame Gobain that for three weeks you have been living on your savings; you have sixty thousand francs a year of your own, and if you cannot give me back your heart at least do not abandon your fortune to me."

"'"I have long known your kindness," said she.

"'"Though you should prefer to remain here," I added impressively, "and to preserve your independence; though the most ardent love should find no favor in your eyes, still do not toil."

"'I gave her three certificates for twelve thousand francs a year each; she took them, opened them languidly, and after reading them through she gave me only a look as my reward.

"I AM CONQUERED," SAID SHE.

She fully understood that I was not offering her money, but freedom.

" ' " I am conquered," said she, holding out her hand, which I kissed. "Come and see me as often as you like."

" 'So she had done herself a violence in receiving me. Next day I found her armed with affected high spirits, and it took two months of habit before I saw her in her true character. But then it was like a delicious May, a springtime of love that gave me ineffable bliss; she was no longer afraid; she was studying me. Alas! when I proposed that she should go to England to return ostensibly to me, to our home, that she should resume her rank and live in our new residence, she was seized with alarm.

" ' " Why not live always as we are!" she said.

" 'I submitted without saying a word.

" ' " Is she making an experiment?" I asked myself as I left her. On my way from my own house to the Rue Saint-Maur thoughts of love had swelled in my heart, and I had said to myself, like a young man, "This evening she will yield."

" 'All my real or affected force was blown to the winds by a smile, by a command from those proud, calm eyes, untouched by passion. I remembered the terrible words you once quoted to me, "Lucretia's dagger wrote in letters of blood the watchword of woman's charter—Liberty!" and they froze me. I felt imperatively how necessary to me was Honorine's consent, and how impossible it was to wring it from her. Could she guess the storms that distracted me when I left as when I came?

" 'At last I painted my situation in a letter to her, giving up the attempt to speak of it. Honorine made no answer, and she was so sad that I made as though I had not written. I was deeply grieved by the idea that I could have distressed her; she read my heart and forgave me. And this was how. Three days ago she received me, for the first time, in her own

blue-and-white room. It was bright with flowers, dressed, and lighted up. Honorine was in a dress that made her bewitching. Her hair framed that face that you know in its light curls; and in it were some sprays of Cape heath; she wore a white muslin gown, a white sash with long floating ends. You know what she is in such simplicity, but that day she was a bride, the Honorine of long past days. My joy was chilled at once, for her face was terribly grave; there were fires beneath the ice.

"'"Octave," she said, "I will return as your wife when you will. But understand clearly that this submission has its dangers. I can be resigned——"

"'I made a movement.

"'"Yes," she went on, "I understand: resignation offends you, and you want what I cannot give—Love. Religion and pity led me to renounce my vow of solitude; you are here!" She paused.

"'"At first," she went on, "you asked no more. Now you demand your wife. Well, here I give you Honorine, such as she is, without deceiving you as to what she will be. What shall I be? A mother? I hope it. Believe me, I hope it eagerly. Try to change me; you have my consent; but if I should die, my dear, do not curse my memory, and do not set down to obstinacy what I should call the worship of the ideal, if it were not more natural to call the indefinable feeling which must kill me the worship of the Divine! The future will be nothing to me; it will be your concern; consult your own mind."

"'And she sat down in the calm attitude you used to admire, and watched me turning pale with the pain she had inflicted. My blood ran cold. On seeing the effect of her words she took both my hands, and, holding them in her own, she said—

"'"Octave, I do love you, but not in the way you wish to be loved. I love your soul—— Still, understand that I love

you enough to die in your service like an Eastern slave, and without a regret. It will be my expiation."

"'She did more; she knelt before me on a cushion, and in a spirit of sublime charity she said—

"'"And perhaps I shall not die!"

"'For two months now I have been struggling with myself. What shall I do? My heart is too full; I therefore seek a friend, and send out this cry, "What shall I do?"

"'OCTAVE.'

"I did not answer this letter. Two months later the newspapers announced the return on board an English vessel of the Comtesse Octave, restored to her family after adventures by land and sea, invented with sufficient probability to arouse no contradiction.

"When I moved to Genoa I received a formal announcement of the happy event of the birth of a son to the Count and Countess. I held that letter in my hand for two hours, sitting on this terrace—on this bench. Two months after, urged by Octave, by Monsieur de Grandville, and Monsieur de Sérizy, my kind friends, and broken by the death of my uncle, I agreed to take a wife.

"Six months after the revolution of July I received this letter, which concludes the story of this couple:

"'MONSIEUR MAURICE:—I am dying though I am a mother—perhaps because I am a mother. I have played my part as a wife well; I have deceived my husband. I have had happiness not less genuine than the tears shed by actresses on the stage. I am dying for society, for the family, for marriage, as the early Christians died for God! I know not of what I am dying, and I am honestly trying to find out, for I am not perverse; but I am bent on explaining my malady to you—you who brought that heavenly physician your uncle, at whose word I surrendered. He was my di-

rector; I nursed him in his last illness, and he showed me the way to heaven, bidding me persevere in my duty.

"'And I have done my duty.

"'I do not blame those who forget. I admire them as strong and necessary natures; but I have the malady of memory! I have not been able twice to feel that love of the heart which identifies a woman with the man she loves. To the last moment, as you know, I cried to your heart, in the confessional, and to my husband, "Have mercy!" But there was no mercy. Well, and I am dying, dying with stupendous courage. No courtesan was ever more gay than I. My poor Octave is happy; I let his love feed on the illusions of my heart. I throw all my powers into this terrible masquerade; the actress is applauded, feasted, smothered in flowers; but the invisible rival comes every day to seek its prey—a fragment of my life. I am rent and I smile. I smile on two children, but it is the elder, the dead one, that will triumph! I told you so before. The dead child calls me, and I am going to him.

"'The intimacy of marriage without love is a position in which my soul feels degraded every hour. I can never weep or give myself up to dreams but when I am alone. The exigencies of society, the care of my child, and that of Octave's happiness never leave me a moment to refresh myself, to renew my strength, as I could in my solitude. The incessant need for watchfulness startles my heart with constant alarms. I have not succeeded in implanting in my soul the sharp-eared vigilance that lies with facility, and has the eyes of a lynx. It is not the lip of one I love that drinks my tears and kisses my eyelids; it is a handkerchief that dries them; my burning eyes are cooled with water, and not with tender lips. It is my soul that acts a part, and that perhaps is why I am dying! I lock up my grief with so much care that nothing is to be seen of it; it must eat into something, and it has attacked my life.

"'I said to the doctors, who discovered my secret, "Make me die of some plausible complaint, or I shall drag my husband with me."

"'So it is quite understood by M. Desplein, Bianchon, and myself that I am dying of the softening of some bone which science has fully described. Octave believes that I adore him, do you understand? So I am afraid lest he should follow me. I now write to beg you in that case to be the little Count's guardian. You will find with this a codicil in which I have expressed my wish; but do not produce it excepting in case of need, for perhaps I am fatuously vain. My devotion may perhaps leave Octave inconsolable but willing to live. Poor Octave! I wish him a better wife than I am, for he deserves to be well loved.

"'Since my spiritual spy is married, I bid him remember what the florist of the Rue Saint-Maur hereby bequeaths to him as a lesson: May your wife soon be a mother! Fling her into the vulgarest materialism of household life; hinder her from cherishing in her heart the mysterious flower of the ideal—of that heavenly perfection in which I believed, that enchanted blossom with glorious colors, and whose perfume disgusts us with reality. I am a Saint-Theresa who has not been suffered to live on ecstasy in the depths of a convent, with the Holy Infant, and a spotless winged angel to come and go as she wished.

"'You saw me happy among my beloved flowers. I did not tell you all: I saw love budding under your affected madness and I concealed from you my thoughts, my poetry; I did not admit you to my kingdom of beauty. Well, well; you will love my child for love of me if he should one day lose his poor father. Keep my secrets as the grave will keep them. Do not mourn for me; I have been dead this many a day, if Saint-Bernard was right in saying that where there is no more love there is no more life.

"'HONORINE.'

"And the Countess died," said the consul, putting away the letters and locking the pocket-book.

"Is the Count still living?" asked the ambassador, "for since the revolution of July he has disappeared from the political stage."

"Do you remember, Monsieur de Lora," asked the consul-general, turning to him, "having seen me going to the steamboat with?——"

"A white-haired man! an old man?" said the painter.

"An old man of forty-five, going in search of health and amusement in Southern Italy. That old man was my poor friend, my patron, passing through Genoa to take leave of me and place his will in my hands. He appoints me his son's guardian. I had no occasion to tell him of Honorine's wishes."

"Does he suspect himself of murder?" said Mademoiselle des Touches to the Baron de L'Hostal.

"He suspects the truth," replied the consul, "and that is what is killing him. I remained on board the steamship that was to take him to Naples until it was out of the roadstead; a small boat brought me back. We sat for some little time taking leave of each other—for ever, I fear. God only knows how much we love the confidant of our love when she who inspired it is no more.

"'That man,' said Octave, 'holds a charm and wears an aureola.' The Count went to the prow and looked down on the Mediterranean. It happened to be fine, and, moved no doubt by the spectacle, he spoke these last words: 'Ought we not, in the interests of human nature, to inquire what is the irresistible power which leads us to sacrifice an exquisite creature to the most fugitive of all pleasures, and in spite of our reason? In my conscience I heard cries. Honorine was not alone in her anguish. And yet I would have it!—— I am consumed by remorse. In the Rue Payenne I was dying of the joys I had not; now I shall die in Italy of the joys I

have had—— Wherein lay the discord between two natures, equally noble, I dare assert?' "

For some minutes profound silence reigned on the terrace.

Then the consul, turning to the two women, asked, "Was she virtuous?"

Mademoiselle des Touches arose, took the consul's arm, went a few steps away, and said to him—

"Are not men wrong, too, when they come to us and make a young girl a wife while cherishing at the bottom of their heart some angelic image, and comparing us to those unknown rivals, to perfections often borrowed from a remembrance, and always finding us wanting?"

"Mademoiselle, you would be right if marriage were based on passion; and that was the mistake of those two, who will soon be no more. Marriage with heart-deep love on both sides would be paradise."

Mademoiselle des Touches turned from the consul, and was immediately joined by Claude Vignon, who said in her ear—

"A bit of a coxcomb is M. de L'Hostal."

"No," replied she, whispering to Claude these words: "for he has not yet guessed that Honorine would have loved him. Oh!" she exclaimed, seeing the consul's wife approaching, "his wife was listening! Unhappy man!"

Eleven was striking by all the clocks and the guests went home on foot along the seashore.

"Still, that is not life," said Mademoiselle des Touches. "That woman was one of the rarest, and perhaps the most extraordinary exceptions in intellect—a pearl! Life is made up of various incidents, of pain and pleasure alternately. The paradise of Dante, that sublime expression of the ideal, that perpetual blue, is to be found only in the soul; to ask it of the facts of life is a luxury against which nature protests every hour. To such souls as those the six feet of a cell and the kneeling chair are all they need."

"You are right," said Léon de Lora; "but good-for-

nothing as I may be, I cannot help admiring a woman who is capable, as that one was, of living by the side of a studio, under a painter's roof, and never coming down, nor seeing the world, nor dipping her feet in the street mud."

"Such a thing has been known—for a few months," said Claude Vignon, with deep irony.

"Comtesse Honorine was not unique of her kind," replied the ambassador to Mademoiselle des Touches. "A man, nay, and a politician, a bitter writer, was the object of such a passion; and the pistol-shot which killed him hit not him alone; the woman who loved lived like a nun ever after."

"Then there are yet some great souls in this age!" said Camille Maupin, and she stood for some minutes pensively leaning on the balustrade of the quay.

PARIS, *January*, 1843.

FACINO CANE.

Translated by ELLEN MARRIAGE.

I ONCE used to live in a little street which probably is not known to you—the Rue de Lesdiguières. It is a turning out of the Rue Saint-Antoine, beginning just opposite a fountain near the Place de la Bastille, and ending in the Rue de la Cerisaie. Love of knowlédge stranded me in a garret; my nights I spent in work, my days in reading at the Orleans' Library, close by. I lived frugally, I had accepted the conditions of the monastic life, necessary conditions for every worker, scarcely permitting myself a walk along the Boulevard Bourdon when the weather was fine. One passion only had power to draw me from my studies; and yet, what was that passion but a study of another kind? I used to watch the manners and customs of the faubourg, its inhabitants, and their characteristics. As I dressed no better than a workingman and cared nothing for appearances, I did not put them on their guard; I could join a group and look on while they drove bargains or wrangled among themselves on their way home from work. Even then observation had come to be an instinct with me; a faculty of penetrating to the soul without neglecting the body; or, rather, a power of grasping external details so thoroughly that they never detained me for a moment and at once I passed beyond and through them. I could enter into the life of the human creatures whom I watched, just as the dervish in the "Arabian Nights" could pass into any soul or body after pronouncing a certain formula.

If I met a workingman and his wife in the streets between eleven o'clock and midnight on their way home from the Ambigu Comique, I used to amuse myself by following them from the Boulevard du Pont aux Choux to the Boulevard Beau-

marchais. The good folk would begin by talking about the play; then from one thing to another they would come to their own affairs, and the mother would walk on and on, heedless of complaint or question from the little one that dragged at her hand, while she and her husband reckoned up the wages to be paid on the morrow, and spent the money in a score of different ways. Then came domestic details, lamentations over the excessive dearness of potatoes, or the length of the winter and the high price of block fuel, together with forcible representations of amounts owing to the baker, ending in an acrimonious dispute, in the course of which such couples reveal their characters in picturesque language. As I listened, I could make their lives mine, I felt their rags on my back, I walked with their gaping shoes on my feet; their cravings, their needs, had all passed into my soul, or my soul had passed into theirs. It was the dream of a waking man. I waxed hot with them over the foreman's tyranny, or the bad customers that made them call again and again for payment.

To come out of my own way of life, to be another than myself through a kind of intoxication of the intellectual faculties, and to play this game at will, such was my recreation. Whence comes the gift? Is it a kind of second-sight? Is it one of those powers which, when abused, ends in madness? I have never tried to discover its source; I possess it, I use it, that is all. But this it behooves you to know, that in those days I began to resolve the heterogeneous mass known as the People into its elements, and to evaluate its good and bad qualities. Even then I realized the possibilities of my suburb, that hot-bed of revolution in which heroes, inventors, and practical men of science, rogues and scoundrels, virtues and vices, were all packed together by poverty, stifled by necessity, drowned in drink, and consumed by ardent spirits.

You would not imagine how many adventures, how many tragedies, lie buried away out of sight in that dolorous city;

how much horror and beauty lurks there. No imagination can reach the truth; no one can go down into that city to make discoveries; for one must needs descend too low into its depths to see the wonderful scenes of tragedy or comedy enacted there, the masterpieces brought forth by chance.

I do not know how it is that I have kept the following story so long untold. It is one of the curious things that stop in the bag from which memory draws out stories at haphazard, like numbers in a lottery. There are plenty of tales just as strange and just as well hidden still left; but some day, you may be sure, their turn will come:

One day my charwoman, a workingman's wife, came to beg me to honor her sister's wedding with my presence. If you are to realize what this wedding was like, you must know that I paid my charwoman, poor creature, four francs a month; for which sum she came every morning to make my bed, clean my shoes, brush my clothes, sweep the room, and make ready my breakfast, before going to her day's work of turning the handle of a machine, at which hard drudgery she earned ten sous. Her husband, a cabinet maker, made four francs a day at his trade; but as they had three children, it was all that they could do to gain an honest living. Yet I have never met with more sterling honesty than in this man and his wife. For five years after I left the quarter, Mère Vaillant used to come on my birthday with a bunch of flowers and some oranges for me—she that had never one franc to put by! Want had drawn us together. I never could give her more than a ten-franc piece, and often I had to borrow the money for the occasion. This will perhaps explain my promise to go to the wedding; I hoped to efface myself in these poor people's merry-making.

The banquet and the ball were given on the first floor above a wineshop in the Rue de Charenton. It was a large room, lighted by oil lamps with tin reflectors. A row of wooden

benches ran round the walls, which were black with grime to the height of the tables. Here some eighty persons, all in their Sunday best, tricked out with ribbons and bunches of flowers, all of them on pleasure bent, were dancing away with heated visages as if the world were about to come to an end. Bride and bridegroom exchanged salutes to the general satisfaction, amid a chorus of facetious "Oh, ohs!" and "Ah, ahs!" less really indecent than the furtive glances of young girls that have been well brought up. There was something indescribably infectious about the rough, homely enjoyment in all countenances.

But neither the faces, nor the wedding, nor the wedding-guests have anything to do with my story. Simply bear them in mind as the odd setting to it. Try to realize the scene, the shabby, red-painted wineshop, the smell of wine, the yells of merriment; try to feel that you are really in the faubourg, among old people, workingmen and poor women giving themselves up to a night's enjoyment.

The band consisted of a fiddle, a clarionet, and a flageolet from the Blind Asylum. The three were paid seven francs in a lump sum for the night. For the money, they gave us, not Beethoven certainly, nor yet Rossini; they played as they had the will and the skill; and every one in the room (with charming delicacy of feeling) refrained from finding fault. The music made such a brutal assault on the drum of my ear, that after a first glance round the room my eyes fell at once upon the blind trio, and the sight of their uniform inclined me from the first to indulgence. As the artists stood in a window recess, it was difficult to distinguish their faces except at close quarters, and I kept away at first; but when I came nearer (I hardly know why) I thought of nothing else; the wedding-party and the music ceased to exist, my curiosity was aroused to the highest pitch, for my soul passed into the body of the clarionet player.

The fiddle and the flageolet were neither of them interest-

ing ; their faces were of the ordinary type among the blind—earnest, attentive, and grave. Not so the clarionet player ; any artist or philosopher must have come to a stop at the sight of him.

Picture to yourself a plaster-mask of Dante in the red lamplight, with a forest of silver-white hair above the brows. Blindness intensified the expression of bitterness and sorrow in that grand face of his ; the dead eyes were lighted up, as it were, by a thought within that broke forth like a burning flame, lit by one sole insatiable desire, written large in vigorous characters upon an arching brow scored across with as many lines as an old stone-wall.

The old man was playing at random, without the slightest regard for time or tune. His fingers traveled mechanically over the worn keys of his instrument ; he did not trouble himself over a false note now and again (a *canard*, in the language of the orchestra), neither did the dancers, nor, for that matter, did my old Italian's acolytes ; for I had made up my mind that he must be an Italian, and an Italian he was. There was something great, something too of the despot about this old Homer bearing within him an "Odyssey" doomed to oblivion. The greatness was so real that it triumphed over his abject position ; the despotism so much a part of him, that it rose above his poverty.

There are violent passions which drive a man to good or evil, making of him a hero or a convict ; of these there was not one that had failed to leave its traces on the grandly hewn, lividly Italian face. You trembled lest a flash of thought should suddenly light up the deep sightless hollows under the grizzled brows, as you might fear to see brigands with torches and poniards in the mouth of a cavern. You felt that there was a lion in that cage of flesh, a lion spent with useless raging against iron bars. The fires of despair had burned themselves out into ashes, the lava had cooled ; but the tracks of the flames, the wreckage, and a little smoke

remained to bear witness to the violence of the eruption, the ravages of the fire. These images crowded up at the sight of the clarionet player, till the thoughts now grown cold in his face burned hot within my soul.

The fiddle and the flageolet took a deep interest in bottles and glasses; at the end of a country dance they hung their instruments from a button on their reddish-colored coats, and stretched out their hands to a little table set in the window recess to hold their liquor supply. Each time they did so they held out a full glass to the Italian, who could not reach it for himself because he sat in front of the table, and each time the Italian thanked them with a friendly nod. All their movements were made with the precision which always amazes one so much at the Blind Asylum. You could almost think that they can see. I came nearer to listen; but when I stood beside them, they evidently guessed I was not a workingman and kept themselves to themselves.

"What part of the world do you come from, you that are playing the clarionet?"

"From Venice," he said, with a trace of Italian accent.

"Have you always been blind, or did it come on afterward——?"

"Afterward," he answered quickly. "A cursed gutta serena."

"Venice is a fine city; I have always had a fancy to go there."

The old man's face lighted up, the wrinkles began to work, he was violently excited.

"If I went with you, you would not lose your time," he said.

"Don't talk about Venice to our doge," put in the fiddle, "or you will start him off, and he has stowed away a couple of bottles as it is—has the prince!"

"Come, strike up, Daddy Canard!" added the flageolet, and the three began to play. But while they executed the four

figures of a square dance, the Venetian was scenting my thoughts; he guessed the great interest I felt in him. The dreary dispirited look died out of his face, some mysterious hope brightened his features and slid like a blue flame over his wrinkles. He smiled and wiped his brow, that fearless, terrible brow of his, and at length grew gay like a man mounted on his hobby.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"Eighty-two."

"How long have you been blind?"

"For very nearly fifty years," he said, and there was that in his tone which told me that his regret was for something more than his lost sight, for great power of which he had been robbed.

"Then why do they call you 'the doge?'" I asked.

"Oh, it is a joke. I am a Venetian noble and I might have been a doge like any one else."

"What is your name?"

"Here, in Paris, I am Père Canet," he said. "It was the only way of spelling my name on the register. But in Italy I am Marco Facino Cane, Prince of Varese."

"What, are you descended from the great *condottiere* Facino Cane, whose lands won by the sword were taken by the Dukes of Milan?"

"Of a truth," returned he. "His son's life was not safe under the Visconti; he fled to Venice, and his name was inscribed on the Golden Book. And now neither Cane nor Golden Book is in existence." His gesture startled me; it told of patriotism extinguished and weariness of life.

"But if you were once a Venetian senator, you must have been a wealthy man. How did you lose your fortune?"

"In evil days."

He waved away the glass of wine handed to him by the flageolet, and bowed his head. He had no heart to drink. These details were not calculated to extinguish my curiosity.

As the three ground out the music of the square dance I gazed at the old Venetian noble, thinking thoughts that set a young man's mind afire at the age of twenty. I saw Venice and the Adriatic; I saw her ruin in the ruin of the face before me. I walked to and fro in that city, so beloved of her citizens; I went from the Rialto Bridge, along the Grand Canal, and from the Riva degli Schiavoni to the Lido, returning to St. Mark's, that cathedral so unlike all others in its sublimity. I looked up at the windows of the Casa Doro, each with its different sculptured ornaments; I saw old palaces rich in marbles, saw all the wonders which a student beholds with the more sympathetic eyes because visible things take their color of his fancy, and the sight of realities cannot rob him of the glory of his dreams. Then I traced back a course of life for this latest scion of a race of condottieri, tracking down his misfortunes, looking for the reasons of the deep moral and physical degradation out of which the lately revived sparks of greatness and nobility shone so much the more brightly. My ideas, no doubt, were passing through his mind, for all processes of thought-communications are far more swift, I think, in blind people, because their blindness compels them to concentrate their attention. I had not long to wait for proof that we were in sympathy in this way. Facino Cane left off playing and came up to me. "Let us go out!" he said; his tones thrilled through me like an electric shock. I gave him my arm, and we went.

Outside on the street he said, "Will you take me back to Venice? will you be my guide? Will you put faith in me? You shall be richer than ten of the richest houses in Amsterdam or London, richer than Rothschild; in short, you shall have the fabulous wealth of the 'Arabian Nights.'"

The man was mad, I thought; but in his voice there was a potent something which I obeyed. I allowed him to lead, and he went in the direction of the Fossés de la Bastille, as if he could see; walking till he reached a lonely spot down

by the river, just where the bridge has since been built at the junction of the Canal Saint-Martin and the Seine. Here he sat down on a stone, and I, sitting opposite to him, saw the old man's hair gleaming like threads of silver in the moonlight. The stillness was scarcely troubled by the sound of the far-off thunder of traffic along the boulevards; the clear night air and everything about us combined to make a strangely unreal scene.

"You talk of millions to a young man," I began, "and do you think that he will shrink from enduring any number of hardships to gain them? Are you not laughing at me?"

"May I die unshriven," he cried vehemently, "if all that I am about to tell you is not true. I was one-and-twenty years old, like you at this moment. I was rich, I was handsome, and a noble by birth. I began with the first madness of all—with love. I loved as no one can love nowadays. I have hidden myself in a chest, at the risk of a dagger thrust, for nothing more than the promise of a kiss. To die for her—it seemed to me to be a whole life in itself. In 1760 I fell in love with a lady of the Vendramin family; she was eighteen years old, and married to a Sagredo, one of the richest senators, a man of thirty, madly in love with his wife. My mistress and I were guiltless as cherubs when the *sposo* caught us together talking of love. He was armed, I was not, but he missed me; I sprang upon him and killed him with my two hands, wringing his neck as if he had been a chicken. I wanted Bianca to fly with me; but she would not. That is the way with women! So I went alone. I was condemned to death, and my property was confiscated and made over to my next-of-kin; but I had carried off my diamonds, five of Titian's pictures taken down from their frames and rolled up, and all my gold.

"I went to Milan, no one molested me, my affair in nowise interested the state. One small observation before I go further," he continued, after a pause, "whether it is true or

not that the mother's fancies at the time of conception or in the months before birth can influence her child, this much is certain, my mother during her pregnancy had a passion for gold, and I am the victim of a monomania, of a craving for gold which must be gratified. Gold is so much a necessity of life for me that I have never been without it; I must have gold to toy with and finger. As a young man I always wore jewelry, and carried two or three hundred ducats about with me wherever I went."

He drew a couple of gold coins from his pocket and showed them to me as he spoke.

"I can tell by instinct when gold is near. Blind as I am, I stop before the jewelers' store windows. That passion was the ruin of me; I took to gambling to play with gold. I was not a cheat—I was cheated; I ruined myself. I lost all my fortune. Then the longing to see Bianca once more possessed me like a frenzy. I stole back to Venice and found her again. For six months I was happy; she hid me in her house and fed me. I thought thus deliciously to finish my days. But the Provveditore courted her, and guessed that he had a rival; we in Italy can feel that. He played the spy upon us, and surprised us together in bed, base wretch! You may judge what a fight for life it was; I did not kill him outright, but I wounded him dangerously.

"That adventure broke my luck. I have never found another Bianca; I have known great pleasures; but among the most celebrated women of the court of Louis XV. I never found my beloved Venetian's charm, her love, her great qualities.

"The Provveditore called his servants, the palace was surrounded and entered. I fought for my life that I might die beneath Bianca's eyes; Bianca helped me to kill the Provveditore. Once before she had refused flight with me; but after six months of happiness she wished only to die with me, and received several thrusts. I was entangled in a great

cloak that they flung over me, carried down to a gondola and hurried to the Pozzi dungeons. I was twenty-two years old; I gripped the hilt of my broken sword so hard that they could only have taken it from me by cutting off my hand at the wrist. A curious chance, or rather the instinct of self-preservation, led me to hide the fragment of the blade in a corner of my cell, as if it might still be of use. They tended me; none of my wounds were serious. At two-and-twenty one can recover from anything. I was to lose my head on the scaffold. I shammed illness to gain time. It seemed to me that the canal lay just outside my cell. I thought to make my escape by boring a hole through the wall and swimming for my life. I based my hopes on the following reasons:

"Every time that the gaoler came with my food there was light enough to read directions written on the walls—'Side of the Palace,' 'Side of the Canal,' 'Side of the Vaults.' At last I saw a design in this, but I did not trouble myself much about the meaning of it; the actual incomplete condition of the Ducal Palace accounted for it. The longing to regain my freedom gave me something like genius. Groping about with my fingers, I spelled out an Arabic inscription on the wall. The author of the work informed those to come after him that he had loosened two stones in the lowest course of masonry and hollowed out eleven feet beyond underground. As he went on with his excavations, it became necessary to spread the fragments of stone and mortar over the floor of his cell. But even if gaolers and inquisitors had not felt sure that the structure of the buildings was such that no watch was needed below, the level of the Pozzi dungeons being several steps below the threshold, it was possible gradually to raise the earthen floor without exciting the warder's suspicions.

"The tremendous labor had profited nothing—nothing at least to him that began it. The very fact that it was left

unfinished told of the unknown worker's death. Unless his devoted toil was to be wasted for ever, his successor must have some knowledge of Arabic, but I had studied Oriental languages at the Armenian convent. A few words written on the back of the stone recorded the unhappy man's fate; he had fallen a victim to his great possessions; Venice had coveted his wealth and seized upon it. A whole month went by before I obtained any result; but whenever I felt my strength failing as I worked, I heard the chink of gold, I saw gold spread before me, I was dazzled by diamonds. Ah! wait.

"One night my blunted steel struck on wood. I whetted the fragment of my blade and cut a hole; I crept on my belly like a serpent; I worked naked and mole-fashion, my hands in front of me, using the stone itself to gain a purchase. I was to appear before my judges in two days' time; I made a final effort, and that night I bored through the wood and felt that there was space beyond.

"Judge of my surprise when I applied my eye to the hole. I was in the ceiling of a vault, heaps of gold were dimly visible in the faint light. The doge himself and one of the Ten stood below; I could hear their voices and sufficient of their talk to know that this was the secret treasury of the republic, full of the gifts of doges and reserves of booty called the Tithe of Venice from the spoils of military expeditions. I was saved!

"When the gaoler came I proposed that he should help me to escape and fly with me, and that we should take with us as much as we could carry. There was no reason for hesitation; he agreed. Vessels were about to sail for the Levant. All possible precautions were taken. Bianca furthered the schemes which I suggested to my accomplice. It was arranged that Bianca should only rejoin us in Smyrna for fear of exciting suspicion. In a single night the hole was enlarged and we dropped down into the secret treasury of Venice.

"What a night that was! Four great casks full of gold

stood there. In the outer room silver pieces were piled in heaps, leaving a gangway between by which to cross the chamber. Banks of silver coins surrounded the walls to the height of five feet.

"I thought the gaoler would go mad. He sang and laughed and danced and capered among the gold, till I threatened to strangle him if he made a sound or wasted time. In his joy he did not notice at first the table where the diamonds lay. I flung myself upon these, and deftly filled the pockets of my sailor's jacket and trousers with the stones. Ah! heaven, I did not take the third of them. Gold ingots lay underneath the table. I persuaded my companion to fill as many bags as we could carry with the gold, and made him understand that this was our only chance of escaping detection abroad.

"'Pearls, rubies, and diamonds might be recognized,' I told him.

"Covetous though we were, we could not possibly take more than two thousand livres weight of gold, which meant six journeys across the prison to the gondola. The sentinel at the water-gate was bribed with a bag containing ten livres weight of gold; and as for the two gondoliers, they believed they were serving the republic. At daybreak we set out.

"Once upon the open sea, when I thought of that night, when I recollected all that I had felt, when the vision of that great hoard arose before my eyes, and I computed that I had left behind thirty millions in silver, twenty in gold, and many more in diamonds, pearls, and rubies—then a sort of madness began to work in me. I had the gold fever.

"We landed at Smyrna and took ship at once for France. As we went on board the French vessel, heaven favored me by ridding me of my accomplice. I did not think at the time of all the possible consequences of this mishap and rejoiced not a little. We were so completely unnerved by all that had happened that we were stupid, we said not a word

to each other, we waited until it should be safe to enjoy ourselves at our ease. It was not wonderful that the rogue's head was dizzy. You shall see how heavily God has punished me.

"I never knew a quiet moment until I had sold two-thirds of my diamonds in London or Amsterdam, and held the value of my gold dust in a negotiable shape. For five years I hid myself in Madrid, then in 1770 I came to Paris with a Spanish name, and led as brilliant a life as may be. Then, in the midst of my pleasures, as I enjoyed a fortune of six millions, I was smitten with blindness. I do not doubt but that my infirmity was brought on by my sojourn in the cell and my work in the stone, if, indeed, my peculiar faculty for 'seeing' gold was not an abuse of the power of sight which predestined me to lose it. Bianca was dead.

"At this time I had fallen in love with a woman to whom I thought to link my fate. I had told her the secret of my name; she belonged to a powerful family; she was a friend of Madame du Barry; I hoped everything from the favor shown me by Louis XV.; I trusted in her. Acting on her advice I went to England to consult a famous oculist, and after a stay of several months in London she deserted me in Hyde Park. She had stripped me of all that I had, and left me without resource. Nor could I make complaint, for to disclose my name was to lay myself open to the vengeance of my native city; I could appeal to no one for aid, I feared Venice. The woman put spies about me to exploit my infirmity. I spare you a tale of adventures worthy of Gil Blas. Your revolution followed. For two whole years that creature kept me at the Bicêtre as a lunatic, then she gained admittance for me at the Blind Asylum; there was no help for it, I went. I could not kill her; I could not see; and I was so poor that I could not pay another arm.

"If only I had taken counsel with my gaoler, Benedetto Carpi, before I lost him, I might have known the exact posi-

tion of my cell, I might have found my way back to the treasury and returned to Venice when Napoleon crushed the republic——

"Still, blind as I am, let us go back to Venice! I shall find the door of my prison, I shall see the gold through the prison walls, I shall hear it where it lies under the water; for the events which brought about the fall of Venice befell in such a way that the secret of the hoard must have perished with Bianca's brother, Vendramin, a doge to whom I looked to make my peace with the Ten. I sent memorials to the First Consul; I proposed an agreement with the Emperor of Austria; every one sent me about my business for a lunatic. Come! we will go to Venice; let us set out as beggars, we shall come back millionaires. We will buy back my estates, and you shall be my heir! You shall be Prince of Varese!"

My head was swimming. For me his confidences reached the proportions of tragedy; at the sight of that white head of his and beyond it the black water in the trenches of the bastile lying still as a canal in Venice, I had no words to answer him. Facino Cane thought, no doubt, that I judged him, as the rest had done, with a disdainful pity; his gesture expressed the whole philosophy of despair.

Perhaps his story had taken him back to happy days and to Venice. He caught up his clarionet and made plaintive music, playing a Venetian boat-song with something of his lost skill, the skill of the young patrician lover. It was a sort of *Super flumina Babylonis*. Tears filled my eyes. Any belated persons walking along the Boulevard Bourdon must have stood still to listen to an exile's last prayer, a last cry of regret for a lost name, mingled with memories of Bianca. But gold soon gained the upper hand, the fatal passion quenched the light of youth.

"I see it always," he said, "dreaming or waking, I see it; and as I pace to and fro, I pace in the treasury, and the diamonds sparkle. I am not so blind as you think; gold and

diamonds light up my night, the night of the last Facino Cane, for my title passes to the Memmi. My God! the murderer's punishment was not long delayed! *Ave Maria*," and he repeated several prayers that I did not heed.

"We will go to Venice!" I said, when he arose.

"Then I have found a man!" he cried, with his face on fire.

I gave him my arm and went home with him. We reached the gates of the Blind Asylum just as some of the wedding-guests were returning along the street, shouting at the top of their voices. He squeezed my hand.

"Shall we start to-morrow?" he asked.

"As soon as we can get some money."

"But we can go on foot. I will beg. I am strong, and you feel young when you see gold before you."

Facino Cane died before the winter was out, after a two months' illness. The poor man had taken a chill.

PARIS, *March*, 1836.

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY
ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN
THE GREAT BRETÊCHE
A MAN OF BUSINESS

PREFACE.

"THE LILY OF THE VALLEY" ("Le Lys dans la Vallée") has considerable importance in the history of Balzac's books, and not a little in that of his life, independently of its intrinsic merit. It brought on a lawsuit between him and the "Revue de Paris," in which the greater part of it was published, and in which he refused to complete it. As the actual suit was decided in his favor, his legal justification is not matter of dispute, and his adversaries put themselves hopelessly in the wrong by reviewing the termination of the book, when it appeared elsewhere, in a strain of virulent but clumsy ridicule. As to where the right or wrong lay, independent of questions of pure law on one side and pure taste on the other, it is not so easy to come to any conclusion. Balzac published an elaborate justification of his own conduct, which does not now appear with the book, but may be found, by any one who is curious, among the rejected prefaces which fill a large part of the twenty-second volume (the third of the "Œuvres Diverses") of his Works. It is exceedingly long, not by any means temperate, and so confused that it is difficult to make head or tail of it. What is clear is that the parties went on the dangerous and unsatisfactory plan of neither complete performance of the work before payment nor complete payment beforehand, but of a *per contra* account, the author drawing money as he wanted it, and sending in copy as he could or chose. Balzac seems to allow that he got into arrears, contending that if he paid those arrears the rest of the work was his own property. But there were complicating disagreements in reference to a simultaneous publication at St. Petersburg; and, on the whole, we may fairly conclude in the not very original terms of "faults on both sides." The affair, however, evidently

gave him much annoyance, and seems to have brought him into some discredit.

The other point of personal interest is that Madame de Mortsauf is very generally said to represent Madame de Berny, his early friend and his first instructress in aristocratic ways. Although there are strong expressions of affection in his letters with regard to this lady, who died early in his career, they do not definitely indicate what is commonly called love. But the whole scenery and atmosphere of "The Lily of the Valley" ("Le Lys dans la Vallée") are those of his own early haunts. Frapesle, which is so often mentioned, was the home of another platonic friend, Madame Zulma Carraud, and there is much in the early experiences of Félix de Vandenesse which has nearly as personal a touch as that of "Louis Lambert" itself.

Dismissing this, we may come to the book itself. Balzac took so much interest in it—indeed, the personal throb may be felt throughout—that he departed (according to his own account, for the second time only) from his rule of not answering criticism. This was in regard to a very remarkable article of M. Hippolyte Castillès (to be found in M. de Lovenjoul's invaluable bibliography, as is the answering letter in the "Œuvres Diverses" *) reflecting upon the rather pagan and materialist "resurrection of the flesh" in Madame de Mortsauf on her death-bed. His plea that it was the disease, not the person, though possessing a good deal of physiological force, is psychologically rather weak, and might have been made much stronger. Indeed, this scene, though shocking and disconcerting to weak brethren, is not merely the strongest in the novel, but one of the strongest in Balzac's works. There is farther to be noted in the book a quaint delineation, in the personage of M. de Mortsauf, of a kind of conjugal torment which, as a rule, is rather borne by husbands at the hands of wives than *vice versa*. The behavior of the

*Sundry Works.

"lily's" husband, sudden rages and all, is exactly that of a shrewish and valetudinarian woman.

This, however, and some minor matters, may be left to the reader to find out and appreciate. The most interesting point, and the most debatable, is the character of the heroine with, in a lesser degree, that of the hero. Of M. Félix de Vandenesse it is not necessary to say very much, because that capital letter from Madame de Manerville (one of the very best things that Balzac ever wrote, and exhibiting a sharpness and precision of mere writing which he too frequently lacked) does fair, though not complete, justice on the young man. The lady, who was not a model of excellence herself, perhaps did not perceive—for it does not seem to have been in her nature to conceal it through kindness—that he was not only as she tells him, wanting in tact, but also wanting, and that execrably, in taste. M. de Vandenesse, I think, ranks in Balzac's list of good heroes; at any rate he saves him later from a fate which he rather richly deserves, and introduces him honorably in other places. But he was not a nice young man. His "pawing" and timid advances on Madame de Mortsauf, and his effusive "kissing and telling" in reference to Lady Dudley, both smack of the worst sides of Rousseau: they deserve not so much moral reprehension as physical kicking. It is no wonder that Madeleine de Mortsauf turned a cold shoulder on him; and it is an addition to his demerits that he seems to have thought her unjust in doing so.

As for the "lily" we come once more to one of those ineradicable differences between French and English taste—one of those moral fosses not to be filled which answer to the physical Channel. I have said that I do not think the last scene unnatural or even repulsive: it is pretty true and rather terrible, and where truth and terror are there is seldom disgust. But, elsewhere, for all her technical purity, her shudderings, and the rest of it, I cannot help thinking that, without insular narrowness or prudery, one may find Madame de

Mortsauf a little rancid, a little like stale cold-cream of roses. And if it is insular narrowness and prudery so to find her, let us thank God for the narrowness which yet leaves room for Cleopatra, for Beatrix Esmond, and for Becky Sharp. I should myself have thought Madame de Mortsauf a person of bad taste in caring at all for such a creature as Félix. But if she did care, I should have thought better of her for pitching her cap over the very highest mill in her care for him, than for this fullsome hankering, this "I would, but dare not," platonism. Still, others may think differently, and that the book is a very powerful book they cannot hold more distinctly than I do.

Some bibliographical details about *Le Lys* (The Lily) have been anticipated above. It need only be added that the appearances in the "Revue de Paris" were in the numbers for November and December, 1835, and that the book was published by Werdet in June of next year. The date of the "Envoi" (afterward removed), August 8, 1827, may have some biographical interest. Charpentier republished the book in a slightly different form in 1839, and, five years later, it was installed in the "Comédie."

The stories of the "Autre Étude"* (other study) are called in the Repertoire of MM. Christophe and Cerfberr "D'Exquises Causeries" ("Choice Chit-chats"). It is not certain that all readers will acquiesce in this epithet, which is used several times in the piece by Balzac himself, though I do not remember that the combination of it with *causerie* is textual. In the first place, the discourses of Marsay and Blondet might be called by unfriendly critics rather sermons than *causeries* (chats). In the second, though Marsay is rather less of a "tiger" than in some of his other performances, the coxcombry of the exhibition exceeds its charm, while Blondet's discussion of womankind has the unreality of all these discussions. Montriveau's story is considerably better than

*"A Study of Woman" is in vol. of "Wild Ass' Skin."

either of these; and it leads up very well to "La Grande Bretêche."

This latter is one of the best known of Balzac's short stories, and may rank among the half-dozen best of all. Contrary to a habit which, though not invariable, is too common with him, he is not long in "getting under way," and he does not waste a single stroke in drawing the actual catastrophe. Bianchon, who generally has a good part assigned him, is here unusually lucky. Indeed, the piece is so short and so good that critical dwelling on it is almost an impertinence.

"A Man of Business" ("Un Homme d'Affaires"), in the eyes of some readers, does not stand very high. La Palférine reappears, and that more exalted La Palférine Maxime de Trailles, "Balzac's pet scoundrel," as some one has called him, though not present, is the hero of the tale, which is artificial and slight enough.

G. S.

Note.—It may be barely necessary for me to protect myself and the translator from a possible charge of mistaking *Lilium candidum* for *Convallaria majalis*. The French for our "lily-of-the-valley" is, of course, *muguet*. But "Lily *in* the Valley" would inevitably sound in English like a worse mistake or a tasteless variation on a consecrated phrase. And "Lily of the Valley" meets the real sense well.

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY.

To Monsieur J. B. Nacquart,

Member of the Royal Academy of Medicine.

Dear Doctor:—Here is one of the most highly wrought stones of the second story of a literary edifice that is being slowly and laboriously constructed; I wish to set your name here, as much to thank the physician who once saved my life as to do honor to the friend of every day. DE BALZAC.

To Madame la Comtesse Natalie de Manerville.

"I YIELD to your wish. It is the privilege of the woman whom we love more than she loves us that she can at any moment make us forget the laws of good sense. To spare ourselves the sight of a wrinkle on your brow, to dissipate a pout on your lips—which so small a contradiction saddens—we work miracles to annihilate distance, we give our blood, we mortgage the future.

"You, to-day, want my past: here it is. But understand this, Natalie: to obey you I have had to trample under foot a repugnance I never before have conquered. Why must you be suspicious of the long and sudden reveries which come over me when I am happiest? Why show the pretty tempers of a woman beloved because I fall silent? Could you not play with the contrasts of my nature without knowing their causes? Have you in your heart secrets which must have mine to gain absolution?

"Well, you have guessed rightly, Natalie, and it is better

perhaps that you should know everything: yes, my life is overshadowed by a phantom; it asserts itself vaguely at the least word that evokes it; it often hovers over me unbidden. I have, buried within my soul, astounding memories, like those marine growths which may be seen in calm waters and which the surges of the storm fling in fragments on the shore.

"Though the travail needed for the utterance of ideas has controlled the old emotions which hurt me so much when they are suddenly aroused, if there should be in this confession any outbreaks that offend you, remember that you threatened me in case of disobedience, and do not punish me for having obliged you.

"I only wish my confidence might increase your tenderness twofold.

"Till this evening. FELIX."

To what genius fed on tears may we some day owe the most touching elegy—the picture of the tortures suffered in silence by souls whose roots, while still tender, find nothing but hard pebbles in the soil of home, whose earliest blossoms are rent by the hands of hate, whose flowers are frost-bitten as soon as they open? What poet will tell of the sorrows of the child whose lips suck the milk of bitterness, whose smiles are checked by the scorching fire of a stern eye? The fiction that should depict these poor crushed hearts, down-trodden by those who are placed about them to encourage the development of their feelings, would be the true story of my childhood.

What vanities could I, a new-born babe, have fretted? What moral or physical deformity earned me my mother's coldness? Was I the offspring of duty, a child whose birth is fortuitous, or one whose existence is a standing reproach?

Sent to be nursed in the country and forgotten by my parents for three years, when I returned to my father's house

I counted for so little that I had to endure the pity of the servants. I know not to what feeling nor to what happy chance I owed it that I was able to rally after this first disaster; as a child I did not understand, and as a man I do not know. My brother and my two sisters, far from mitigating my fate, amused themselves by tormenting me. The mutual compact, in virtue of which children hide each other's peccadilloes and learn an infant code of honor, was null and void as regarded me; nay more, I often found myself in disgrace for my brother's misdeeds, with no power of appeal against the injustice; was it that insidious self-interest, of which a germ exists even in children, prompted them to add to the persecution that weighed on me, so as to win the good graces of the mother whom they feared no less? Was it the result of their imitative instinct? Was it a desire to try their power, or a lack of fellow-feeling? All these causes combined perhaps to deprive me of the comfort of brotherly kindness. Cut off already from all affection, I could love nothing, and nature had made me loving! Is there an angel who collects the sighs of such ever-repressed feeling? If misprized sentiments turn to hatred in some souls, in mine they became concentrated, and wore a channel from whence at a later date they gushed into my life. In some characters the habit of shrinking relaxes every fibre and gives rise to fear; and fear reduces us to perpetual subjection. Hence proceeds a weakness which debases a man and gives him an indescribable taint of servility.

But this constant torment gave me the habit of exerting a force which increased with exercise, and predisposed my soul to moral fortitude. Always on the lookout for some new misery, as martyrs expect a fresh blow, my whole being must have expressed a gloomy dejection which stifled all the graces and impulses of childhood, a condition which was regarded as a symptom of idiocy, justifying my mother's ominous prognostics. A sense of this injustice gave rise in my spirit

to a premature feeling of pride, the outcome of reason, which, no doubt, was a check on the evil disposition fostered by such a manner of education.

Though completely neglected by my mother, I was occasionally the cause of some scruples in her mind; she sometimes talked of my learning something, and expressed a purpose of teaching me; then I shuddered miserably at the thought of the anguish of daily contact with her. I blessed my deserted loneliness, and was happy in being left in the garden to play with pebbles, watch the insects and gaze at the blue sky.

Though isolation made me dreamy, my love of meditation had its rise in an incident which will give you an idea of my first woes. I was so entirely overlooked that the governess often forgot to put me to bed. One evening, peacefully sitting under a fig tree, I was looking at a star with the passionate curiosity known to children, to which, in me, precocious melancholy gave a sort of sentimental intuition. My sisters were playing and shouting; I heard the remote clatter like an accompaniment to my thoughts. The noise presently ceased; night fell. By chance my mother then noticed my absence. To avert a scolding, our governess, a certain terrible Mademoiselle Caroline, justified my mother's affected fears by declaring that I had a horror of home; that if she had not watched me narrowly, I should have run away before then; that I was not weak of intellect, but sly; that of all the children she had ever had care of, she had never known one whose disposition was so vile as mine.

She then pretended to search for me, and called me; I replied; she came to the fig tree where she knew that I was.

"What have you been doing here?" she asked.

"I was looking at a star."

"You were not looking at a star," cried my mother, who was listening from her balcony, "as if a child of your age could know anything of astronomy!"

"Oh, madame," cried Mademoiselle Caroline, "he turned on the tap of the cistern, the garden is flooded!"

There was a great commotion. My sisters had amused themselves with turning the tap to see the water flow; but startled by a spurt sideways that had wetted them all over, they lost their heads, and fled without turning the water off again. Accused and convicted of having devised this piece of mischief, and of lying when I asserted my innocence, I was severely punished. But, worst of all, I was mocked at for my love of star-gazing, and my mother forbade my staying in the garden in the evening.

Tyrannical prohibitions give zest to a passion, even more in children than in men; children have the advantage of thinking of nothing else but the forbidden thing, which then becomes irresistibly fascinating. So I was often caned for my star. Unable to confide my woes to any human being, I told my griefs to the star in that exquisite internal warbling by which a child lisps its first ideas as he has already lisped his first words. At the age of twelve, a boy at school, I still contemplated it with a sense of unspeakable rapture, so deep are the marks set on the heart by the impressions received in the dawn of life.

My brother Charles, five years my senior, was not less handsome as a child than he is as a man; he was my father's favorite, my mother's darling, the hope of the family, and consequently the king of the household. Well made and strong, he had a tutor. I, frail and sickly, was sent, at the age of five, to a day-school in the town, whither I was taken in the morning by my father's valet, who fetched me home in the afternoon. I took my midday meal in a basket but scantily filled, while my comrades brought ample supplies. This contrast of my necessity with their abundance was the source of much suffering. The famous *rillettes* and *rillons* of Tours (a kind of sausage meat) formed the larger part of our midday luncheon, between breakfast in the morning and late dinner

at the hour of our return home. This preparation, highly prized by some epicures, is rarely seen at Tours on any genteel table; though I may have heard of it before going to school, I had never been so happy as to see the brown confection spread on a slice of bread for my own eating; but even if it had not been a fashionable dainty at school, my longing for it would have been no less eager, for it had become a fixed idea in my brain, just as the stews concocted by her porter's wife inspired a longing in one of the most elegant of Paris duchesses, who, being a woman, gratified her fancy.

Children can read such a longing in each other's eyes just as you can read love: thenceforth I was a standing laughing-stock. My school-fellows, almost all of the storekeeper class, would come to display their excellent *rillettes*, and ask me if I knew how they were made, where they were sold, and why I had none. They would smack their lips as they praised their *rillons*, fragments of pork fried in their own fat and looking like boiled truffles; they took stock of my basket, and, finding only Olivet cheeses or dried fruit, struck me dumb by saying, "Why, you have nothing at all!" in a way that taught me to estimate the difference made between my brother and myself.

This comparison of my own misery with the good fortune of others dashed the roses of my childhood and blighted my blossoming youth. The first time that I, taken in by a semblance of generosity, put out my hand to take the longed-for treat from a hypocrite who offered it, the boy snatched it away, raising a shout of laughter among the others who were aware of the practical joke.

If the loftiest minds are accessible to vanity, we may surely pardon a child for crying when he finds himself despised and made game of. Treated thus, most children would become greedy, sneaking, and mean. To avoid persecution, I fought my foes; the courage of despair made me formidable, but I was detested, and remained without defense against treachery. One evening, as I left school, a handkerchief, tightly rolled

and full of stones, struck me on the back. When the valet, who avenged me amply, told my mother about it, she only said—

"That dreadful child will never be anything but a trouble to us!"

I then suffered the most miserable distrust of myself, discerning at school the same repulsion as was felt for me by my family. I was thrown in on myself at school and at home. A second fall of snow checked the blossoming of the germs sown in my soul. Those who were loved were, I saw, sturdy rascals; with this I comforted my pride, and I dwelt alone. Thus there was no end to the impossibility of pouring out the feelings which swelled my poor little heart. Seeing me always alone, hated and dejected, the master confirmed my parents' unjust notions as to my evil nature.

As soon as I could read and write, my mother had me exiled to Pont-le-Voy, a school managed by Oratorians, who received children of my age into a class designated as that of the *Pas latins* (Latin steps), which also included scholars whose defective intelligence had precluded the rudiments. There I remained for eight years, seeing no one, and leading the life of a Pariah. And this was why: I had but three francs a month for pocket-money, a sum which barely sufficed for the pens, knives, rulers, ink and paper, with which we had to provide ourselves. And so, being unable to buy stilts, or ropes, or any of the things needed for school-boy amusements, I was banished from every game; to gain admittance I must either have toadied the rich or have flattered the strong boys in my division. Now the least idea of such meanness, which children so often drift into, raised my gorge.

I used to sit under a tree reading the books given out to us once a month by the librarian. How much anguish lay hidden in the depths of this unnatural isolation, what misery this desertion caused me! Imagine what my tender soul must have felt when, at the first distribution of prizes, I was awarded

the two most anxiously looked for—that for composition and that for translation! When I went up to the platform to receive them, in the midst of applause and cheers, I had neither father nor mother to rejoice with me, while the room was full of my comrades' parents. Instead of kissing the visitor who distributed the prizes, as was usual, I threw myself on his breast and melted into tears. In the evening I burnt my laurel crowns in the stove. The other boys' parents stayed in the town during the week of examinations preceding the prize-giving, so that my school-fellows went off next morning in high glee; while I, whose parents were only a few leagues away, remained at school with the "*Outre-mers*" (over the seas), a name given to boys whose families lived in the islands or abroad. In the evening, while prayers were read, the barbarous little wretches would boast of the good dinners they had had at home.

You will see that my misfortunes went on growing in proportion to the circumference of the social spheres in which I moved. How many efforts have I not made to invalidate the sentence which condemned me to live in myself alone! How many hopes long cherished, with a thousand soul-felt aspirations, have been destroyed in a single day! To induce my parents to come to the school, I wrote them letters full of feeling, rather emphatically worded perhaps—but should these letters have drawn down on me my mother's reproaches and ironical comments on my style? Still, not discouraged, I promised to do all my parents insisted on as the conditions of a visit; I implored my sisters' aid, writing to them on their name-days and birthdays with the punctuality of a hapless, deserted child—but with vain persistency.

As the day for prize-giving approached, I made my entreaties more urgent, and wrote of my hopes of success. Deceived by my parents' silence I expected them with exultant hopes, telling my school-fellows that they were coming; and when, as family parties began to arrive, the old

porter's step echoed along the passages I felt sick with anticipation. But the old man never uttered my name.

One day when I confessed that I had cursed my existence, the priest spoke to me of heaven, where the palm branch grows that the Saviour promised to the *Beati qui lugent.* So in preparing for my first communion, I threw myself into the mystic gulf of prayer, bewitched by religious notions, whose spiritual fairy dreams enchant the youthful mind. Fired with eager faith I besought God to renew in my favor the fascinating miracles of which I read in the history of martyrs. At five I had gone forth to a star; at twelve I was knocking at the door of the sanctuary. My ecstasy gave rise to unutterable dreams which supplied my imagination, gave fervor to my tenderness, and strengthened my thinking powers. I often ascribed these sublime visions to angels charged with fashioning my soul to divine ends, and they gave my eyes the power of seeing the inmost soul of things; they prepared my heart for the magic which makes the poet wretched when he has the fatal power of comparing what he feels with what exists, the great things he craves after with what he obtains; they wrote in my brain a book in which I have read what I was required to express; they touched my lips with the fire of the *improvisatore.*

My father having conceived some doubts as to the tendency of the Oratorian teaching, came to fetch me from Pont-le-Voy, and placed me in a boarding-house for boys in Paris, situated in the Marais. I was now fifteen. On examination as to my acquirements, the pupil from Pont-le-Voy was judged capable of entering the third class. The miseries I had endured at home, at day-school, and at Pont-le-Voy were renewed under a new aspect during my life at the pension Lepître. My father gave me no money. When my parents had ascertained that I could be fed, clothed, crammed with Latin and stuffed with Greek, that was enough. In the whole course of my career at school and college, I have

known perhaps a thousand fellow-students, and I never heard of a case of such utter indifference.

Monsieur Lepître, a fanatical adherent of the Bourbons, had been thrown in my father's way at the time when some devoted royalists tried to rescue Queen Marie Antoinette from the Temple; they had since renewed their acquaintance. Hence Monsieur Lepître conceived it his duty to remedy my father's oversight; but the sum he allowed me monthly was small, for he did not know what my parents' intentions might be.

M. Lepître occupied a fine old house, the Hôtel Joyeuse, where, as in all the ancient residences of the nobility, there was a lodge for a gate-porter. During the hour of recreation, before the usher took us in a file to the Lyceum of Charlemagne, the wealthy boys got breakfast at the lodge, provided by the porter named Doisy. Monsieur Lepître either knew nothing of Doisy's business or he winked at it. The man was a perfect smuggler, made much of by the boys in their own interest; he was the screen for all our mischief, our confidant when we stole in after hours, our go-between with the lending library for prohibited books. Breakfast with a cup of coffee was in the most aristocratic taste, in consequence of the exorbitant price to which colonial products rose under Napoleon. If the use of coffee and of sugar was a luxury to our parents, in us it was a sign of such arrogant superiority as was enough to give us a passion for it, if the tendency to imitation, greediness, and the infection of fashion had not been enough. Doisy gave us credit; he supposed that every schoolboy must have sisters or aunts who would uphold his honor and pay his debts.

For a long time I resisted the blandishments of the coffee-bar. If my judges could have known the force of temptation, the heroic efforts of my soul to attain to such stoicism, and the suppressed rages of my long resistance, they would have dried away my tears instead of provoking them to flow.

But, boy as I was, could I have acquired the magnanimity which leads us to scorn the scorn of others? And I was also feeling, perhaps, the temptations of various social vices whose power was increased by my longing.

At the end of the second year my father and mother came to Paris. The day of their arrival was announced to me by my brother; he was living in Paris, but had not paid me a single visit. My sisters were to come, too, and we were all to see Paris together. The first day we were to dine at the Palais-Royal to be close to the Théâtre Français. In spite of the intoxicating delight of such a programme of unhoped-for joys, my glee was mitigated by the sense of a coming storm, which so easily blights those who are inured to troubles. I had to confess a debt of a hundred francs to the Sieur Doisy, who threatened to apply to my parents for the money. I determined to make use of my brother as Doisy's dragoman, to plead my repentance and mediate for forgiveness. My father was in favor of mercy; but my mother was relentless; her dark-blue eye petrified me, and she fulminated terrible forecasts.

"If I allowed myself such licenses at seventeen, what should I become later? Could I be a son of hers? Did I want to ruin the family? Was I the only child to be thought of? The career on which my brother Charles had embarked required an independent income, and he deserved it, for he had already done the family credit, while I should disgrace it. Did I know nothing of the value of the money I cost them? What benefit to my education would come of coffee and sugar? Was not such conduct an apprenticeship to every vice?" Marat was an angel as compared with me, so it seemed to me.

After enduring the shock of this torrent, which filled my soul with terrors, my brother took me back to the boarding-house, I lost my dinner at the café of the "Three Provençal Brothers," and was deprived of seeing Talma in "Britan-

nicus." This was my interview with my mother after a parting of twelve years.

When I had gone through the "humanities," my father still left me in the care of Monsieur Lepître. I was to study higher mathematics, to work at law for a year, and begin the advanced branches.

Now, as a private boarder, and free from attending classes, I hoped for a truce between misery and me. But notwithstanding that I was now nineteen—or perhaps because I was nineteen—my father continued the system which had of old sent me to school without sufficient food, to college without pocket-money, and had run me into debt to Doisy. I had very little money at command, and what can be done in Paris without money? My liberty, too, was ingeniously fettered. Monsieur Lepître always sent me to the law-schools with an usher at my heels, who handed me over to the professor, and came again to escort me back. A girl would have been watched with less care than my mother's fears devised for my protection. Paris had justifiable terrors for my parents. Students are secretly interested in the self-same thoughts as fill the heads of school-girls; do what you will, a girl always talks of lovers, a youth of women.

But in Paris at that time the conversation of fellow-students was tinged by the Oriental and Sultan-like world of the Palais-Royal. The Palais-Royal was an Eldorado of love where ingots ready coined were current every evening. Virgin doubts were there enlightened, and there our curiosity might find gratification. The Palais-Royal and I were asymptotes, ever tending to meet, but never meeting.

This is how fate thwarted my hopes. My father had introduced me to one of my aunts, who lived in the Ile Saint-Louis, and I was to dine there every Thursday and Sunday, escorted thither by Madame or Monsieur Lepître, who went out themselves on those days, and called for me on their way home in the evening. A singular form of recreation! The

Marquise de Listomère was a very ceremonious fine lady, to whom it never occurred to make me a present of a crown-piece. As old as a cathedral, as much painted as a miniature, and magnificently dressed, she lived in her mansion just as though Louis XV. were still alive, seeing none but old ladies and gentlemen, a company of fossils among whom I felt as if I were in a cemetery. No one ever spoke to me, and I had not the courage to speak first. Cold looks of aversion made me feel ashamed of my youth, which was so annoying to all the others.

I hoped for the success of an escapade based on their indifference, making up my mind to steal off one evening directly after dinner and fly to the wooden galleries. My aunt, when once she was absorbed in whist, paid no further heed to me. Jean, her manservant, cared little enough for Monsieur Lepître; but those ill-starred dinners were, unfortunately, lengthy in consequence of the antiquity of the jaws or the weakness of the teeth of that ancient company.

At last, one evening between eight and nine, I had reached as far as the stairs, as tremulous as Bianca Capello when she made her escape; but just as the porter had let me out, I saw Monsieur Lepître's cab in the street, and the worthy man asking for me in his wheezy tones. Three times did fate come between the hell of the Palais-Royal and the paradise of my youth. On the day when, ashamed of being so ignorant, and already twenty, I determined to defy every peril to gain my end—at the very moment when I was about to evade Monsieur Lepître as he got into a hackney coach (a difficult matter, for he had a club-foot, and was as stout as Louis XVIII.)—who should appear but my mother, arriving in a post-chaise. I was riveted by her eye, and stood like a bird fascinated by a serpent.

What chance had led to this meeting? Nothing could be simpler. Napoleon was making a last effort. My father,

foreseeing the return of the Bourbons, had come to explain matters to my brother, who was already embarked in diplomacy under the imperial rule. He had come from Tours with my mother. My mother had undertaken to convey me home, to remove me from the dangers which, to those who were keen enough to follow the advance of the enemy, seemed to threaten the capital.

Thus, in a few minutes I was snatched from Paris, just as my residence there would have proved fateful.

The torments of an imagination for ever agitated by thwarted desires, and the weariness of a life saddened by constant privations, had thrown me into study, just as in former times men weary of life shut themselves up in cloisters. Study had become a passion with me, which might have blighted me utterly by imprisoning me at an age when young men ought to be free to enjoy the activities of their natural springtime.

This slight sketch of my early years, in which you can imagine much sadness, was necessary to give you some idea of the effect of that training on my later life. Bearing the stamp of so many adverse influences, at the age of twenty I was stunted, thin, and pale. My spirit, full of cravings, struggled with a body which was frail indeed in appearance, but which—as an old doctor of Tours was wont to say—was going through the last annealing process of an iron temperament. Young in body and old in mind, I had read and thought so much, that I was metaphysically familiar with life in its highest summits, just when I was about to explore the tortuous difficulties of its narrow passes and the sandy ways of its plains. Exceptional chances had kept me late in that delightful phase when the soul is conscious of its first agitation, when it is opening to its first raptures, when everything is fresh and full of savor. I was standing between boyhood prolonged by study and manhood late in

showing its green shoots. No young man was ever more fully prepared than I to feel and to love.

To fully understand my narrative, think of me at the charming age when the lips are pure from falsehood, when the eyes are honest though veiled by lids weighed down by shyness in conflict with desire, when the spirit is not yet abject before jesuitical worldliness, and when the heart is as timid as its first impulses are vehemently generous.

I need say nothing of my journey from Paris to Tours with my mother. Her cold demeanor crushed the effusiveness of my affection. As we started afresh after each relay, I resolved to talk to her; but a look or a word scared away the phrases I had composed as a beginning. At Orleans, where we were to sleep, my mother reproached me for my silence. I fell at her knees and clasped them, shedding hot tears; I poured out my heart to her, bursting with affection; I tried to soften her by the eloquence of my pleading; starving for love, my words might have stirred the soul of a stepmother. My mother told me I was acting a farce. I complained of her neglect; she called me an unnatural son. There was such a cold grip about my heart that at Blois I went out on the bridge to throw myself into the Loire. I was put off from suicide simply by the height of the parapet.

On my arrival, my two sisters, who scarcely knew me, showed more surprise than warmth; later, however, by comparison they seemed to me full of kindliness. I was given a bedroom on the third floor. You will understand the extent of my wretchedness when I tell you that my mother left me, a grown man, with no linen but my shabby college outfit, and no wardrobe but what I had brought from Paris.

When I flew from one end of the drawing-room to the other to pick up her handkerchief, she gave me thanks as cold as she might have granted to a servant. Watching her anxiously as I did, to discover whether there were in her heart a friable spot where I could insert some buds of affec-

tion, I saw her a tall, parched, thin woman; a gambler, selfish and insolent—like all the Listomères, in whom impertinence is part of their dower. She saw nothing in life but duties to be performed; every cold-hearted woman I have ever met has made duty her religion, as she did; she accepted our adoration as a priest accepts incense at mass; my elder brother seemed to have absorbed the modicum of maternal feeling her heart could contain. She was constantly inflicting small stings of biting irony, the weapon of heartless people, which she freely used on us who could not retort.

In spite of all these thorny barriers, instinctive feeling is held by so many roots, the pious terror inspired by a mother includes so many ties—indeed, to give her up as hopeless is too cruel a shock—that the sublime blunder of loving her lasted till a day when at a riper age we judged her truly. Then began her children's reprisals. Their indifference, resulting from the disenchantment of the past, enhanced by the slimy wreckage they have rescued from it, overflows her tomb even.

This frightful despotism drove out the voluptuous dreams I had madly hoped to realize at Tours. I flung myself desperately into my father's library, where I read all the books I did not already know. My long hours of study spared me all contact with my mother; but they left me, morally, worse off than ever. My eldest sister, who has since married our cousin the Marquis de Listomère, sometimes tried to comfort me without being able to soothe the irritation from which I suffered. I longed for death.

Great events, of which I knew nothing, were then in the air. The Duc d'Angoulême, having left Bordeaux to join Louis XVIII. in Paris, was to be the recipient of the ovations prepared by the enthusiasm that possessed France on the return of the Bourbons. Touraine in a ferment round its legitimate princes, the town in a turmoil, the windows hung with flags, the residents all in their best, the preparations for the

fête, the indefinable something in the air which mounted to my head, all made me long to be present at the ball that was to be given to the Prince. When, greatly daring, I expressed this wish to my mother—at that time too ill to go out—she was extremely wroth. Had I dropped from the Congo, that I knew nothing of what was going on? How could I imagine that the family would not be fitly represented at the ball? In the absence of my father and brother, of course it would be my part to go. Had I no mother? Did she never think of her children's happiness? In a moment the almost disowned son had become a person of importance. I was as much amazed by finding myself of consequence as by the deluge of ironical reasoning with which my mother received my request.

I questioned my sisters, and heard that my mother, who liked theatrical surprises, had necessarily considered the matter of my dress. The tailors of Tours, in the sudden rush of customers, could none of them undertake to fit me out. So my mother had sent for a needlewoman, who, as usual in provincial towns, was supposed to be able to do every kind of sewing. A blue coat was secretly made for me, more or less successfully. Silk stockings and new pumps were easly procured; men wore their waistcoats short, and I could have one of my father's; for the first time in my life I donned a shirt with a goffered frill that gave importance to my figure and was lost in the folds of my cravat. When I was dressed, I was so little like myself that my sisters' compliments gave me courage to make my appearance before the whole of assembled Touraine.

It was a formidable enterprise! But too many were called to this festivity to allow of there being many elect. Thanks to my slender figure, I was able to creep into a tent in the gardens of the Maison Papion, and got close to the armchair in which the Prince was enthroned. In an instant I was stifled by the heat, dazzled by the lights, by the crimson

hangings, the gilt ornaments, the dresses and the diamonds of the first public function I had ever attended. I was pushed about by a throng of men and women, all hustling and crowding each other in a cloud of dust. The blatant brass and Bourbon strains of the military band were drowned by shouts of—

"Hurrah for the Duc d'Angoulême! Long live the King! Hurrah for the Bourbons!"

The fête was an outbreak of enthusiasm in which every one vied with the rest in his vehement eagerness to hail the rising sun of the Bourbons, a display of party selfishness that left me cold, made me feel small, and shrink into myself.

Carried away like a straw in a whirlpool, I was childishly wishing that I were the Duc d'Angoulême, and could mingle with these princes thus made a show of to the staring crowd. This silly provincial fancy gave rise to an ambition dignified by my character and by circumstances. Who might not have coveted this worship, repeated on a more splendid scale a few months later when all Paris rushed to greet the Emperor on his return from the island of Elba? This supreme power over the masses, whose feelings and vitality discharge themselves into one soul, made me a sudden devotee to Glory, the goddess who puts the French to the sword nowadays, as the Druidess of old sacrificed the Gauls.

And then, as suddenly, I saw the woman who was fated to goad perpetually my ambitious hopes and to crown them by throwing me into contact with royalty.

Too shy to ask any one to dance with me, and fearing, too, that I might make confusion in the figures, I naturally felt very awkward, not knowing what to do with myself. Just when I was most conscious of the fatigue of constantly moving under the pressure of the crowd, an officer trod on my feet, which were swollen by the pressure of my shoes and by the heat. This crowning annoyance disgusted me with the whole affair. It was impossible to get away and I took refuge

in a corner at the extreme end of a vacant bench, where I sat down, my gaze fixed, motionless, and sulky. A woman, misled by my delicate looks, took me for a boy half-asleep while awaiting my mother's pleasure, and seated herself by me with the light movement of a bird settling on its nest. I was at once aware of a feminine fragrance which flashed upon my soul as Oriental poetry has flashed upon it since. I looked at my neighbor, and was more dazzled by her than I had been by the ball.

If you have at all entered into my previous life, you can guess the emotions that swelled my heart. My eyes were suddenly fascinated by white rounded shoulders that made me long to bury my face in them, shoulders faintly pink, as if they were blushing to find themselves bare for the first time, bashful shoulders with a soul of their own and a satin skin shining in the light like a silken fabric. Between these shoulders ran a furrow which my eyes, bolder than my hand, glided into. My heart beat as I stood up to look over them, and I was entirely captivated by a bosom modestly covered with gauze, perfect in roundness, and bluely veined as it lay softly bedded in lace frills. The least details of the charming head were allurements stirring me to endless delight: the sheen of the hair knotted above a neck as peach-like as a little girl's, the white partings made by the comb along which my imagination played as in a new-made path—everything together turned my brain.

Looking around to make sure that no one saw me, I buried my face in that back as a baby hides in its mother's breast, and kissed those shoulders all over, rubbing my cheek against them. The lady gave a piercing cry, inaudible above the music; she turned sharply round, saw me, and said, "Monsieur!"

If she had said, "My good boy, what possesses you?" I should perhaps have killed her; but this word *Monsieur* brought hot tears to my eyes.

I was petrified by a look fired with righteous anger, and an exquisite face crowned with a plait of fair brown hair, in harmony with those adorable shoulders. The crimson of offended modesty flamed in her face, which was already softening with a woman's forgiveness for a mad act when she is the cause of it, and when she sees a passion of worship in the tears of repentance. She arose and walked away with the dignity of a queen.

Then I understood how ridiculous was my position; then, and not till then, I felt that I was dressed like a Savoyard's monkey. I was ashamed. I sat there quite stupefied, relishing the apple I had stolen, feeling on my lips the warmth of the blood I had scented; quite unrepentant, and following with my eyes this being come down from heaven. Then, overpowered by this first physical indulgence of my heart's wild fever, I wandered through the ball-room, now a desert, without finding the unknown vision. I went home and to bed, an altered creature.

A new soul, a soul with iridescent wings, had burst its chrysalis within me. My favorite star, dropping from the blue waste where I had admired it, had become woman, while preserving its light, its sparkle, and its brilliancy. Suddenly, knowing nothing of love, I had fallen in love. Is not this first irruption of the most intense feeling a man can know a very strange thing? I had met some pretty women in my aunt's drawing-room; they had not made the slightest impression on me. Is there an hour, a conjunction of the stars, a combination of fitting circumstances, a particular woman above all other women, which seal a passion as exclusive at the age when passion includes the whole female sex?

As I thought that my chosen lady dwelt in Touraine, I inhaled the air with rapture; I saw a blue in the sky which I have never since perceived elsewhere.

Though mentally I was in ecstacy, I seemed to be very ill; my mother was at once alarmed and remorseful. Like animals

aware of approaching distemper, I would creep into a corner of the garden to dream of the kisses I had stolen. A few days after the memorable ball my mother began to ascribe my neglect of study, my indifference to her searching looks, my heedlessness of her irony, and my gloomy behavior to the natural development of a growing man. Country air, the universal remedy for every malady of which science can give no account, was regarded as the best means of curing me of my apathy. My mother decided that I should spend a few days at Frapesle, a château on the Indre, between Montvazon and Azay-le-Rideau, with a friend of hers, to whom, no doubt, she gave her private instructions.

On the day when I was thus given the key of the fields, I had plunged so deeply into the ocean of love that I had crossed it. I knew not my fair one's name; what could I call her or where could I find her? To whom, indeed, could I speak of her? My natural shyness increased the unaccountable terrors which possess a young heart at the first flutter of love, and made me begin with the melancholy which is the end of a hopeless passion. I was quite content to come and go and wander about the country, with the childlike spirit that is ready for anything and has a certain tinge of chivalry; I was prepared to hunt through all the country-houses of Touraine, wandering on foot, and saying at each pretty turret, "It will be there!"

So one Thursday morning I left Tours by the Saint-Eloy gate, I crossed the bridges of Saint-Sauveur, I reached Poncher, my nose in the air in front of every house I passed, and was on the road to Chinon. For the first time in my life I could rest under a tree, walk fast or slowly as I wished without being called to account by any one. To a poor creature so utterly crushed by the various despotisms which weigh more or less on every young life, the first taste of freedom, though exerted in trifles, brought unspeakable expansion to my soul.

Several reasons combined to make that a high day full of delights. In my childhood my walks had never taken me more than a league out of the town. My excursions in the neighborhood of Pont-le-Voy and the walks I had taken in Paris had not surfeited me with rural beauty. Nevertheless, I had retained from the earliest impressions of my life a strong feeling of the beauty inherent in the scenery round Tours, with which I was familiar. Thus, though I was new to what constitutes the poetry of a site, I was unconsciously exacting, as men are who have conceived of the ideal of an art without ever having practiced it.

To go to the château of Frapesle, those who walk or ride shorten the way by crossing the common known as the Landes de Charlemagne, a waste lying at the top of the plateau which divides the valley of the Cher from that of the Indre, and which is reached by a cross-road from Champy. This flat and sandy down, depressing enough for about a league, ends in a coppice adjoining the road to Saché, the village nearest to Frapesle. This country-lane, leading into the Chinon road at some distance beyond Ballan, skirts an undulating plain devoid of remarkable features as far as the hamlet of Artanne. Thence a valley opens down to the Loire, from Montvazon at the head; the hills seem to rebound under the country-houses on each range of slopes; it is a glorious emerald basin, and at the bottom the Indre winds in serpentine curves. I was startled by the view into a rapturous astonishment for which the dullness of the Landes or the fatigue of my walk had prepared me: If this woman, the flower of her sex, inhabits a spot on earth, it must be this!

At the thought I leaned against a walnut tree; and now, whenever I revisit that beloved valley, I go to rest under its boughs. Under that tree, the confidant of all my thoughts, I examine myself as to the changes that may have taken place during the time that has elapsed since last I left it.

My heart had not deceived me: it was there that she dwelt;

the first château I could see on a shelf of the down was her home. When I sat down under my walnut tree, the noonday sun struck sparks from the slates of *her* roof and the glass panes of *her* windows. Her cambric dress was the white spot I could see among some vines under a pleached alley. She was, as you know already, though as yet you know nothing, the Lily of this Valley, where she grew for heaven, filling it with the fragrance of her virtues. I saw an emblem of infinite love with nothing to keep it alive but an object only once seen, in the long watery ribbon which glistens in the sun between two green banks, in the rows of poplars which deck that vale of love with moving tracery, in the oak woods thrust forward between the vineyards on the hillsides rounded by the river into constant variety, and in the soft outlines crossing each other and fading to the horizon.

If you wish to see nature fair and virginal as a bride, go thither some spring day; if you want to solace the bleeding wounds of your heart, return in the late days of autumn. In spring love flutters his wings under the open sky; in autumn we dream of those who are no more. Weak lungs inhale a healing freshness, the eye finds rest on golden-hued groves from which the soul borrows sweet peace.

At the moment when I looked down on the valley of the Indre, the mills on its falls gave voice to the murmuring vale; the poplars laughed as they swayed; there was not a cloud in the sky; the birds sang, the grasshoppers chirped, everything was melody. Never ask me again why I love Touraine. I do not love it as we love our childhood's home, nor as we love an oasis in the desert; I love it as an artist loves art. I love it less than I love you; still, but for Touraine, perhaps I should not now be alive.

Without knowing why, my eyes were riveted to the white spot, to the woman who shone in that garden as the bell of a convolvulus shines among shrubs and is blighted by a touch. My soul deeply stirred, I went down into this bower and

presently saw a village, which to my highly strung poetic mood seemed matchless. Picture to yourself three mills, charmingly situated among pretty islets with imbayed banks, and crowned with clumps of trees, in the midst of a meadow of water; for what other name can I give to the aquatic vegetation, so brightly tinted, which carpets the stream, floats on its surface, follows its eddies, yields to its caprices, and bends to the turmoil of waters lashed by the mill-wheels. Here and there rise shoals of pebbles on which the river breaks in a fringe of surf reflecting the sun. Amaryllis, water-lilies, white and yellow, reeds, and phlox dress the banks with glorious hues. A crumbling bridge of rotting timbers, its piles hung with flowers, its balustrade covered with herbage and velvety mosses, and hanging over the stream, but not yet fallen; time-worn boats, fishing-nets, the monotonous song of a shepherd, ducks paddling from isle to isle, or preening themselves on the shoals—*le jard*, as the coarse gravel deposited by the Loire is called; miller's men, a cap over one ear, loading their mules; every detail made the scene strikingly artless. Then, beyond the bridge, imagine two or three farms, a dovecote, sundry turrets, thirty houses or more, standing apart in gardens divided by hedges of honeysuckle, jessamine, and clematis; heaps of manure in front of every door, and domestic fowls in the road—and you see the village of Pont-du-Ruan, a pretty hamlet crowned with an old church of characteristic style, a church of the time of the Crusades, such as painters love for their pictures. Set it all in the midst of ancient walnut trees, of young poplars with their pale, gold foliage, add some elegant dwellings rising from broad meadows where the eye loses itself under the warm misty sky, and you will have some idea of the thousand beauties of this lovely country.

I followed the lane to Saché along the left bank of the river, noting the details of the hills that broke the line of the opposite shore. At last I reached a park of venerable trees

which showed me that I was at Frapesle. I arrived exactly as the bell was ringing for late breakfast. After this meal, my host, never suspecting that I had come from Tours on foot, took me all over his grounds, and from every part of them I could see the valley under various aspects; here through a vista and there spread out before me. In many places my gaze was attracted to the horizon by the broad golden tide of the Loire, where between the rolling hills sails showed their fantastic shapes flying before the wind. As I climbed a ridge I could admire for the first time the château of Azay, a diamond with a thousand facets with the Indre for a setting, and perched on piles buried in flowers. There in a dell I saw the romantic mass of the château of Saché, a melancholy spot, full of harmonies too sad for superficial minds, but dear to poets whose spirit is stricken. I myself at a later time loved its silence, its huge hoary trees and the mystery that seemed to hang over that deserted hollow. And still, each time I caught sight, on the shoulder of the next hill, of the pretty little château I had seen and chosen at a first glance, my eye lingered on it with delight.

"Oh, ho!" said my host, reading in my eyes an eager desire such as a youth of my age expresses without guile, "you scent a pretty woman from afar as a dog scents game."

I did not like the tone of this remark, but I asked the name of the place and of the owner.

"It is Clochegourde," said he, "a pretty house belonging to the Comte de Mortsauf, the representative of a family noted in the history of Touraine, whose fortune dates from the time of Louis XI., and whose name reveals the adventure to which he owes his arms and his fame. He is descended from a man who survived hanging. The arms borne by the Mortsaufs are: *Or*, on a cross potent and counter-potent, *sable*, a fleur-de-lys rooted, of the field. Motto, *Dieu saulve le Roi notre Sire* (God save our Sire the King).

"The Count came to settle here on the return of the

émigrés. The house of Lenoncourt-Givry becomes extinct in his wife, who was a Demoiselle de Lenoncourt; Madame de Mortsauf is an only child. The small wealth of this family is in such strong contrast to the splendor of their names that from pride—or perhaps from necessity—they always live at Clochegourde, and see no one. Hitherto their devotion to the Bourbons may have justified their isolation; but I doubt whether the King's return will change their way of living. When I settled here last year I paid them a call of politeness; they returned it and asked us to dinner. Then the winter kept us apart for some months and political events delayed our return, for I have only lately come home to Frapesle. Madame de Mortsauf is a woman who might take the first place anywhere."

"Does she often go to Tours?"

"She never goes there. Yes," he added, correcting himself, "she went there quite lately, on the occasion when the Duc d'Angoulême passed through, and was very gracious to Monsieur de Mortsauf."

"It is she!" I cried.

"She! Who?"

"A woman with beautiful shoulders."

"You will find many women with beautiful shoulders in Touraine," said he, laughing; "but if you are not tired, we can cross the river and go up to Clochegourde, where you may possibly recognize your fine shoulders."

I agreed, not without reddening from pleasure and shyness. By about four o'clock we reached the house on which my eyes had so fondly lingered. This little château, which looked well in the landscape, is, in fact, a modest building. It has five windows in front; that at each end of the south front projects by about two yards, giving the effect of wings and adding to the importance of the house. The middle window serves as the door, whence double steps lead to a garden extending in terraces down to a meadow bordering the Indre.

Though this meadow is divided by a lane from the lowest terrace shaded by a row of ailanthus and acacia trees, it looks like part of the grounds, for the lane is sunk between the terrace on one side and a thick hedge on the other. The slope between the house and the river is taken advantage of to avoid the inconvenience of being so near the water without losing the pretty effect. Under the dwelling-house are the stables, coach-houses, storerooms, and kitchens, with doors under archways.

The roof is pleasingly curved at the angles, the dormer windows have carved mullions, and finials of lead over the gables. The slates, neglected no doubt during the revolution, are covered with the rust-colored and orange, clinging lichens that grow on houses facing the south. The glazed door at the top of the steps has above it a little campanile on which may be seen the achievement of the Blamont-Chauvrys: Quarterly *gules*, a pale *vair* between two hands proper, and *or*, two lances *sable* in chevron. The motto, *See, but touch not*, struck me strangely. The supporters, a griffin and a dragon chained *or*, had a good effect in sculpture. The revolution had damaged the ducal coronet and the crest, a palm branch *vert* fruited *or*. Senart, secretary to the Committee of Public Safety, was bailiff of Saché till 1781, which accounts for this destruction.

The decorative character gives an elegant appearance to this country-house, as delicately finished as a flower, and hardly seeming to weigh on the ground. Seen from the valley, the first floor looks as if it were the second floor; but on the side toward the courtyard it is on the same level as the wide path ending in a lawn graced with raised flower-beds. To right and left vineyards, orchards, and some arable land dotted with walnut trees slope away steeply, surrounding the house with verdure down to the brink of the river, which is bordered on this side with clumps of trees whose various tints of green have been grouped by the hand of nature.

As I mounted the winding road to Clochegourde, I admired these well-assorted masses, and breathed an atmosphere redolent of happiness. Has our moral nature, like physical nature, electric discharges and swift changes of temperature? My heart throbbed in anticipation of the secret events which were about to transform it once for all, as animals grow sportive before fine weather. This, the most important day in my life, was not devoid of any circumstance that could contribute to sanctify it. Nature had dressed herself like a maiden going forth to meet her beloved; my soul had heard her voice for the first time, my eyes had admired her, as fruitful, as various as my imagination had painted her in those day-dreams at school of which I have told you something, but too little to explain their influence over me, for they were as an apocalypse, figuratively predicting my life; every incident of it, happy or sad, is connected with them by some whimsical image, by ties visible only to the eye of the soul.

We crossed an outer court, enclosed by the outbuildings of a rural habitation—a granary, a winepress, cow-houses, and stables. A servant, warned by the barking of a watchdog, came out to meet us, and told us that Monsieur le Comte, who had gone to Azay in the morning, would presently return, no doubt, and that Madame la Comtesse was at home. My host looked at me. I trembled to think that he might not choose to call on Madame de Mortsauf in her husband's absence, but he bade the servant to announce our names.

Driven by childish eagerness, I hurried into the long anteroom which ran across the house.

"Come in, pray," said a golden voice.

Although Madame de Mortsauf had spoken but one word at the ball, I recognized her voice, which sank into my soul and filled it as a sunbeam fills and gilds a prisoner's cell. Then, reflecting that she might recognize me, I longed to fly; it was too late; she appeared at the drawing-room door, and

our eyes met. Which of us reddened most deeply I do not know. She returned to her seat in front of an embroidery frame, the servant having pushed forward two chairs; she finished drawing her needle through as an excuse for her silence, counted two or three stitches, and then raised her head, that was at once proud and gentle, to ask Monsieur de Chessel to what happy chance she owed the pleasure of his visit.

Though curious to know the truth as to my appearance there, she did not look at either of us; her eyes were fixed on the river; but from the way she listened, it might have been supposed that she had the faculty of the blind, and knew all the agitations of my soul by the least accent of speech. And this was the fact.

Monsieur de Chessel mentioned my name and sketched my biography. I had come to Tours some few months since with my parents, who had brought me home when the war threatened Paris. She saw in me a son of Touraine, to whom the province was unknown, a young man exhausted by excessive work, sent to Frapesle to rest and amuse myself, and to whom he had shown his estate, as it was my first visit. I had told him, only on reaching the bottom of the hill, that I had walked from Tours that morning; and fearing overfatigue, as my health was feeble, he had ventured to call at Clochegourde, thinking she would allow me to rest there. Monsieur de Chessel spoke the exact truth. But a genuinely happy chance seems so elaborate an invention, that Madame de Mortsauf was still distrustful; she looked at me with eyes so cold and stern that I lowered mine, as much from a vague sense of humiliation as to hide the tears I withheld from falling. The haughty lady saw that my brow was moist with sweat; perhaps, too, she guessed the tears, for she offered me any refreshment I might need with a comforting kindness which restored my powers of speech.

I blushed like a girl caught in the wrong, and in a voice,

quavering like an old man's, I replied with thanks, but declining anything.

"All I wish," I said, raising my eyes, which met hers for the second time, but for an instant as short as a lightning-flash, "is that you will allow me to remain here; I am so stiff with fatigue that I cannot walk."

"How can you doubt the hospitality of our lovely province?" said she. "You will perhaps give us the pleasure of seeing you at dinner at Clochegourde?" she added to her neighbor.

I flashed a look at my friend, a look so full of entreaty that he beat about the bush a little to accept this invitation, which, by its form, required a refusal.

Though knowledge of the world enabled Monsieur de Chessel to distinguish so subtle a shade, an inexperienced youth believes so firmly in the identity of word and thought in a handsome woman that I was immensely surprised when, as we went home in the evening, my host said, half-jokingly, to me—

"I stayed because you were dying to do so; but if you cannot patch matters up, I may be in a scrape with my neighbors."

This "if you cannot patch matters up" gave me matter for thought. If Madame de Mortsauf liked me, she could not be annoyed with the man who had introduced me to her. So Monsieur de Chessel thought I might be able to interest her —was not this enough to give me the power? This solution confirmed my hopes at a moment when I needed such support.

"That is hardly possible," replied Monsieur de Chessel, "my wife expects us."

"She has you every day," replied the Countess, "and we can send her a message. Is she alone?"

"She has the Abbé de Quélus with her."

"Very well, then," said she, rising to ring the bell, "you will dine with us."

This time Monsieur de Chessel thought her sincere, and gave me a look of congratulation.

As soon as I was certain of spending a whole evening under this roof, I felt as if eternity were mine. To many an unhappy wretch to-morrow is a word devoid of meaning, and at this moment I was one of those who have no belief in to-morrow; when I had a few hours to call my own, I crowded a lifetime of rapture into them.

Madame de Mortsauf then began to talk of the country, of the crops, of the vines—subjects to which I was a stranger. In the mistress of a house this behavior argues want of breeding, or else contempt for the person she thus shuts out of the conversation, but in the Countess it was simply embarrassment. Though at first I fancied she was affecting to regard me as a boy, and envied the privilege of thirty years, which allowed Monsieur de Chessel to entertain his fair neighbor with such serious matters, of which I understood nothing, and though I tormented myself by thinking that everything was done for him; within a few months I knew all that a woman's silence can mean and how many thoughts are disguised by desultory conversation.

I at once tried to sit at my ease in my chair; then I perceived the advantage of my position, and gave myself up to the delight of hearing the Countess' voice. The breath of her soul lurked behind the procession of syllables, as sound is divided in the notes of a keyed flute; it died undulating on the ear, whence it seemed to drive the blood. Her way of pronouncing words ending in *i* was like the song of birds; her pronunciation of *ch* was like a caress; and the way in which spoke the letter *t* betrayed a despotic heart. She unconsciously expanded the meaning of words, and led one's spirit away into a supernatural world. How often have I permitted a discussion to go on which I might have ended; how often have I allowed myself to be unjustly blamed, merely to hear that music of the human voice, to breathe the air that

came from her lips so full of her soul, to clasp that spoken light with as much ardor as I could have thrown into pressing the Countess to my heart! What a song, as of some joyful swallow, when she could laugh; but what a ring, as of a swan calling to its fellow-swans, when she spoke of her sorrows!

The Countess' inattention to me allowed me to study her. My eyes feasted as they gazed at the lovely speaker; they embraced her form, kissed her feet, played with the ringlets of her hair. And all the time I was a prey to the terror which only those can understand who have, in the course of their lives, known the immeasurable joys of a genuine passion. I was afraid lest she should detect my gaze fixed on the spot between her shoulders which I had kissed so ardently. My fear whetted the temptation, and I yielded to it. I looked, my eye rent the stuff of her dress, and I saw a mole that marked the top of the pretty line between her shoulders, a speck lying on milk; this, ever since the ball, had blazed out of the darkness in which the sleep of youths seems to float when their imagination is ardent and their life chaste.

I can sketch for you the principal features which would everywhere have attracted attention to the Countess; but the most exact drawing, the warmest glow of color, would express nothing of it. Her face is one of those of which no one could give a true portrait but the impossible artist whose hand can paint the glow of inward fires, and render the luminous essence which science denies, which language has no word for, but which a lover sees. Her mass of fine, fair hair often gave her headaches, caused no doubt by a sudden rush of blood to the head. Her rounded forehead, prominent like that of La Gioconda, seemed to be full of unspoken ideas, of suppressed feelings—flowers drowned in bitter waters. Her eyes were greenish, with spots of hazel, and always pale in color; but when her children were concerned, of if she was betrayed into any vehement emotion of joy or grief, rare in the life of a resigned wife, her eye could flash with a

subtle flame, which seemed to have derived its fire from the deepest springs of life, and which would, no doubt, dry them up; a lightning gleam that has wrung tears from me when she shed on me her terrible disdain, and that she found adequate to abash the boldest gaze.

A Greek nose that Phidias might have chiseled, joined by a double curve to lips of exquisite shape, gave strength to her oval face; and her complexion, like a camellia-petal, was charmingly tinted with tender rose in the cheeks. She was not thin, but this did not detract from the grace of her figure, nor from the roundness that made every outline beautiful, though fully developed. You will at once understand the character of this perfection when I tell you that at the junction with the upper arm of the dazzling bosom that had bewitched me, there could be no roll nor wrinkle. Her throat, where her head was set on, showed none of those hollows that make some women's necks look like tree-trunks; the muscles showed no cords, and every line was curved with a grace as distracting to the eyes as to the painter's brush. A delicate down died away on her cheeks and on the back of her neck, catching the light with a silky sheen. Her ears were small and shapely—the ears of a slave and of a mother, she used to say. Later, when I dwelt in her heart, she would say, "Here comes Monsieur de Mortsauf," and be quite right, when I could as yet hear nothing—I, whose hearing is remarkably keen. Her arms were beautiful; her hands, with their turned-up finger-tips, were long, and the nails set into the flesh as in antique statues.

I should offend you by attributing greater beauty to a flat figure than to a full one, but that you are an exception. A round figure is a sign of strength; but women who are built so are imperious, willful, and voluptuous rather than tender. Women who are flatly formed are, on the contrary, self-sacrificing, full of refinement, and inclined to melancholy; they are more thoroughly women. A flat figure is soft and supple;

a full one is rigid and jealous. Now you know the kind of shape she had. She had the foot of a lady, a foot that walks little, is easily tired, and is engaging to look upon when it peeps from under the petticoat.

Though she was the mother of two children, I have never met with any woman more genuinely maidenly. Her expression was so girlish, and at the same time amazed and dreamy, that it brought the eye back to gaze, as a painter invites it back to a face in which his genius has embodied a world of feelings. Her visible qualities, indeed, can only be expressed by comparisons. Do you remember the wild, austere fragrance of a heath we plucked on our way home from the Villa Diodati, a flower you admired so much for its coloring of pink and black—then you will understand how this woman could be elegant though so far from the world, natural in her expressions, refining all that came to belong to her—pink and black. Her frame had the green tenderness we admire in leaves but just opened; her mind had the intense concentration of a savage's; she was a child in feeling sobered by grief, the mistress of the house, and an unwedded soul.

She was charming without artifice in her way of sitting down, of rising, of being silent, or of throwing out a remark. Habitually reserved, and vigilant as the sentinel on whom the safety of all depends, ever on the watch for disaster, she sometimes smiled in a way that betrayed a laughing spirit buried under the demeanor required by her mode of life. Her womanly vanity had become a mystery; she inspired romance instead of the gallant attentions which most women love; she revealed her genuine self, her living fire, her blue dreams, as the sky shows between the parting clouds. This involuntary self-betrayal made a man thoughtful, unless, indeed, he were conscious of an unshed tear, dried by the fire of his passion.

The rareness of her movements, and yet more of her looks—for she never looked at anybody but her children—gave incredible solemnity to all she did and said, when she did or

said a thing with that manner which a woman can assume if she is compromising her dignity by an avowal.

Madame de Mortsauf was, on that day, wearing a cambric gown with fine pink stripes, a collar with a broad hem, a black sash and black shoes. Her hair was simply twisted into a knot and held by a tortoise-shell comb.

There is the promised sketch. But the constant emanation of her spirit on all who were about her, that nourishing element diffused in waves as the sun diffuses its light, her essential nature, her attitude in serene hours, her resignation in a storm, all the chances of life which develop character, depend, like atmospheric changes, on unexpected and transient circumstances which have no resemblance to each other excepting in the background against which they are seen. This will inevitably be depicted as part of the incidents of this narrative—a true domestic epic, as great in the sight of the wise as tragedies are in the eyes of the crowd; a tale which will interest you, both by the part I played in it and by its resemblance to that of many a woman's destiny.

Everything at Clochegourde was characterized by English neatness. The drawing-room in which the Countess was sitting was paneled throughout and painted in two shades of stone color. On the chimney-shelf stood a clock in a mahogany case surmounted by a tazza, and flanked by two large white-and-gold china jars in which stood two Cape heaths. On the console was a lamp; in front of the fireplace a backgammon board. Thick cotton ropes looped back the plain white calico curtains without any trimmings. Holland covers, bound with green galoon, were over all the chairs, and the worsted work stretched on the Countess' frame sufficiently revealed the reason for so carefully hiding the furniture. This simplicity was really dignified. No room, of all I have seen since, has ever filled me with such a rush of pregnant impressions as I then felt crowding on me in that drawing-room at Cloche-

gourde—a room as still and remote as its mistress' life, and telling of the monastic regularity of her occupations. Most of my ideas, even my most daring flights in science or in politics, have had their birth there, as perfumes emanate from flowers; and here grew the unknown plant which shed its fertilizing power over me; here glowed the solar heat which developed all that was good and dried up all that was bad in me.

From the window the view extended over the valley from the hill where Pont-de-Ruan lies scattered, to the château of Azay, and the eye could follow the curves of the opposite downs varied by the turrets of Frapesle, the church, village, and manor-house of Saché towering above the meadow-land. The scene, in harmony with a peaceful existence, unvaried by any emotions but those of family life, breathed peace into the soul. If I had seen her for the first time here, between the Comte de Mortsauf and her children, instead of discovering her in the splendor of her ball dress, I could not have stolen that delirious kiss, for which at this moment I felt some remorse, believing that it might wreck the future prospects of my passion! No, in the gloomy temper begotten of my sad life, I should have knelt before her, have kissed her little shoes, have dropped some tears on them, and, without trepidation, fear or regret, have thrown myself into the Indre.

But, having breathed the jessamine freshness of her skin and tasted the milk in that cup of love, my soul was filled with longing and hope for human joys: I would live, I would wait for the hour of fulfillment as a savage looks out for the moment of revenge. I longed to swing from the branches, to rush among the vines, to wallow in the Indre; my companions should be the silence of the night, the languor of living, the heat of the sun, that I might eat at my leisure the delicious apple I had bitten into. If she had asked me for the singing-flower, or the riches buried by Morgan the de-

stroyer, I would have found them for her only to obtain the real riches, the speechless blossom that I longed for.

When I roused myself from the dream into which I had been thrown by contemplating my idol, during which a servant had come in to speak to her, I heard her talking of the Count. Then only did it strike me that a woman belonged to her husband. The thought made my brain reel. I felt a fierce but dreary curiosity to see the possessor of this treasure. Two feelings were uppermost—hatred and fear; hatred, which recognized no obstacle and measured every difficulty without dread; fear, vague indeed but genuine, of the coming struggle, of its result, and, above all, of Her. A prey to indescribable presentiments, I dreaded the handshaking which is so undignified; I had visions of those elastic difficulties against which the firmest will is battered and blunted; I feared the power of inertia, which in our day deprives social life of the moments of climax that passionate souls crave for.

"Here comes Monsieur de Mortsauf," said she.

I started to my feet like a frightened horse. Though this impulse did not escape the notice of either Monsieur de Chessel or the Countess, I was spared any speechless comment, for a diversion was effected by a little girl, of about six years old as I supposed, who came in saying—

"Here is my father."

"Well, Madeleine?" said her mother.

The child gave her hand to Monsieur de Chessel when he held out his, and looked at me fixedly after making an astonished little curtsey.

"Are you satisfied with her health?" said Monsieur de Chessel to the Countess.

"She is better," replied the mother, stroking the little girl's hair as she sat huddled in her lap.

A question from Monsieur de Chessel taught me the fact that Madeleine was nine years old; I showed some surprise at my mistake, and my astonishment brought a cloud to the mother's

brow. My friend shot me one of those looks by which men of the world give us a second education. This was, no doubt, a mother's wound which might not be opened or touched. A frail creature, with colorless eyes and a skin as white as porcelain lighted from within, Madeleine would probably not have lived in the air of a town. Country air, and the care with which her mother brooded over her, had kept the flame alive in a body as delicate as a plant grown in a hot-house in defiance of the severity of a northern climate. Though she was not at all like her mother, she seemed to have her mother's spirit, and that sustained her. Her thin, black hair, sunken eyes, hollow cheeks, lean arms, and narrow chest told of a struggle between life and death, an unceasing duel in which the Countess had hitherto been victorious. The child made an effort to be gay, no doubt to spare her mother suffering; for now and again, when she was unobserved, she languished like a weeping-willow. You might have taken her for a gypsy child suffering from hunger, who had begged her way across country, exhausted but brave, and dressed for her public.

"Where did you leave Jacques?" asked her mother, kissing her on the white line that parted her hair into two bands like a raven's wings.

"He is coming with my father."

The Count at this moment came in, leading his little boy by the hand. Jacques, the very image of his sister, showed the same signs of weakliness. Seeing these two fragile children by the side of such a magnificently handsome mother, it was impossible not to understand the causes of the grief which gave pathos to the Countess' brow and made her silent as to the thoughts which are confided to God alone, but which stamp terrible meaning on the forehead. Monsieur de Mortsauf, as he bowed to me, gave me a glance not so much of inquiry as of the awkward uneasiness of a man whose distrust arises from his want of practical observation and analysis.

After mentioning my name, and what had brought me

thither, his wife gave him her seat and left the room. The children, whose eyes centred in their mother's as if they derived their light from her, wanted to go with her; she said, "Stay here, my darlings," and laid her finger on her lips.

They obeyed, but they looked sad.

Oh! To hear that word "darling," what task might one not have undertaken? Like the children, I felt chilled when she was no longer there.

My name changed the Count's impulses with regard to me. From being cold and supercilious, he became, if not affectionate, at least politely pressing, showed me every mark of consideration, and seemed happy to see me. Long ago my father had devoted himself to play a noble but inconspicuous part for our sovereigns, full of danger, but possibly useful. When all was lost, and Napoleon had climbed to the highest pinnacle, like many secret conspirators, he had taken refuge in the peace of a provincial life and quiet home, bowing before accusations as cruel as they were unmerited—the inevitable reward of gamblers who stake all for all or nothing, and collapse after having been the pivot of the political machine. I, knowing nothing of the fortunes, the antecedents, or the prospects of my own family, was equally ignorant of the details of this forgotten history which Monsieur de Mortsauf remembered. However, if the antiquity of my name, in his eyes the most precious hallmark a man could possess, might justify a reception which made me blush, I did not know the real reason until later. For the moment the sudden change put me at my ease. When the two children saw that the conversation was fairly started among us three, Madeleine slipped her head from under her father's hand, looked at the open door, and glided out like an eel, followed by Jacques. They joined their mother, for I heard them talking and trotting about in the distance, like the hum of bees around the hive that is their home.

I studied the Comte de Mortsauf, trying to guess at his

character, but I was so far interested by some leading features to go no further than a superficial examination of his countenance. Though he was no more than five-and-forty, he looked nearly sixty, so rapidly had he aged in the general wreck which closed the seventeenth century. The fringe of hair, like a monk's, which framed his bald head, ended over his ears in grizzled locks on his temples. His face had a remote resemblance to that of a white wolf with a blood-stained muzzle, for his nose was hot and red, like that of a man whose constitution is undermined, whose digestion is weak, and his blood vitiated by early disease. His flat forehead, too wide for a face that ended in a point, was furrowed across at unequal distances, the result of an open-air life, and not of intellectual labors, of constant ill-fortune, and not of the effort to defy it. His cheek-bones, high and sunburnt, while the rest of his face was sallow, showed that his frame was so strongly built as to promise a long life.

His bright, tawny, hard eye fell on you like winter sunshine, luminous without heat, restless without thought, distrustful without purpose. His mouth was coarse and domineering, his chin long and flat.

He was tall and thin, with the air of a gentleman who relies on a conventional standard of worth, who feels himself superior to his neighbor by right, inferior in fact. The easy-going habits of a country life made him neglectful of his person; his clothes were those of a country proprietor, regarded alike by the peasants and by his neighbors as merely representing a landed estate. His brown, sinewy hands showed that he never wore gloves, unless for riding or on Sunday to go to church. His shoes were clumsy.

Although ten years of exile, and ten of agricultural life, had thus affected his appearance, he still bore traces of noble birth. The most rancorous Liberal—a word not then coined—would at once have discerned in him the chivalrous loyalty, the unfading convictions of a constant reader of the "Quo-

tidienne," and having admired him as a religious man, devoted to his party, frank as to his political antipathies, incapable of being personally serviceable to his side, very capable of ruining it, and ignorant of the state of affairs in France. The Count was, in fact, one of those upright men who yield not a jot, and obstinately bar all progress, valuable to die weapon in hand at the post assigned to them, but stingy enough to give their life rather than their money.

During dinner I detected in the hollows of his faded cheeks, and in the glances he stole at his children, the traces of certain importunate thoughts which came to die on the surface. Who that saw him could fail to understand him? Who would not have accused him of having transmitted to his children their lack of vitality! But even if he blamed himself, he allowed no one else the right of condemning him. He was as bitter as an authority consciously at fault, but without sufficient magnanimity or charm to make up for the quota of suffering he had thrown into the scale; and that his private life must be full of harshness could be seen in his hard features and ever-watchful eyes.

Thus, when his wife came back, with the two children clinging to her, I apprehended disaster, as when walking over the vaults of a cellar the foot has a sort of sense of the depths below. Looking at these four persons together, looking at them, as I did, each in turn, studying their faces and their attitude toward each other, thoughts of melancholy fell upon my heart as fine gray rain throws a mist over a fair landscape after a bright sunrise.

When the immediate subject of conversation was exhausted, the Count again spoke of me, overlooking Monsieur de Chessel, and telling his wife various facts relating to my family, which were perfectly unknown to me. He asked me how old I was. When I told him, the Countess repeated my start of surprise at hearing the age of her little girl. She thought me perhaps about fourteen. This, as I afterward learned, was a

second tie that bound her to me so closely. I read it in her soul. Her motherly instinct was aroused, enlightened by a late sunbeam which gave her a hope. On seeing me at past twenty so fragile and yet so wiry, a voice whispered to her perhaps, "They will live!" She looked at me inquisitively, and I felt at the moment that much ice was melted between us. She seemed to have a thousand questions to ask, but reserved them all.

"If you are ill from overwork," said she, "the air of our valley will restore you."

"Modern education is fatal to children," the Count said. "We cram them with mathematics, we beat them with hammers of science, and wear them out before their time. You must rest here," he went on. "You are crushed under the avalanche of ideas that has been hurled down on you. What an age must we look forward to after all this teaching brought down to the meanest capacity, unless we can forefend the evil by placing education once more in the hands of religious bodies."

This speech was indeed the forerunner of what he said one day at an election when refusing to vote for a man whose talents might have done good service to the royalist cause: "I never trust a clever man," said he to the registrar of votes.

He now proposed to take us round the gardens, and arose.

"Monsieur——" said the Countess.

"Well, my dear," he replied, turning round with a rough haughtiness that showed how much he wished to be master in his own house, and how little he was so at this time.

"Monsieur walked from Tours this morning; Monsieur de Chessel did not know it, and took him for a walk in Frapesle."

"You were very rash," said he to me, "though at your age——," and he wagged his head in token of regret.

The conversation was then resumed. I very soon found out how perverse his royalism was, and what caution was necessary to swim in his waters without collisions. The servant, now arrayed in livery, announced dinner. Monsieur de Chessel gave his arm to Madame de Mortsauf, and the Count gaily put his hand in mine to go to the dining-room, which was at the opposite end to the drawing-room, on the same floor.

This room, floored with white tiles made in the country, and wainscoted waist high, was hung with a satin paper divided into large panels framed with borders of fruit and flowers; the window curtains were of cotton stuff, bound with red; the sideboards were old Boule inlay, and the wood-work of the chairs, upholstered with needle-work, was of carved oak. The table, though abundantly spread, was not luxurious; there was old family plate of various dates and patterns, Dresden china—not yet in fashion again—octagonal water bottles, agate-handled knives, and bottle ands of Chinese lacquer. But there were flowers in varnished tubs, with notched and gilt rims. I was delighted with these old-fashioned things, and I thought the réveillon paper, with its flowered border, superb.

The glee that filled all my sails hindered me from discerning the insuperable obstacles placed between her and me by this imperturbable life of solitude in the country. I sat by her, at her right, I poured out her wine and water. Yes! Unhoped-for joy! I could touch her gown, I ate her bread. Only three hours had gone by, and my life was mingling with hers! And we were bound together, too, by that terrible kiss, a sort of secret which filled us alike with shame.

I was defiantly base; I devoted myself to pleasing the Count, who met all my civilities half-way; I would have fondled the dog, have been subservient to the children's least whim; I would have brought them hoops or marbles, have been their horse to drive; I was only vexed that they had not already

taken possession of me as a thing of their own. Love has its intuition as genius has, and I dimly perceived that his violence and surliness and hostility would be the ruin of my hopes. This dinner was to me a time of exquisite raptures. Finding myself under her roof, I forgot her real coldness and the indifference that lay beneath the Count's politeness. In love, as in life, there is a period of full growth where it is self-sufficient. I made some blundering answers, in keeping with the secret tumult of my passions; but no one could guess this, much less she who knew nothing of love. The rest of the evening was as a dream.

This beautiful dream came to an end when, by the light of the moon, in the hot fragrant night, I again crossed the Indre amid the white visions that hung over the fields and shore and hills, hearing the thin, monotonous call on one note, melancholy and incessant, at equal intervals, uttered by some tree-frog, of which I know not the scientific name, but which, since that fateful day, I never hear but with most exquisite and extreme delight.

Here, again, though rather late, I discerned, as elsewhere, the stony insensibility against which all my feelings had hitherto been blunted; I wondered whether it would be always thus; I believed myself to be under some fatal influence; the gloomy incidents of my past life struggled with the purely personal joys I had just experienced.

Before re-entering Frapesle, I looked back at Clochegourde and saw below a boat, a punt such as in Touraine is called a *toue*, moored to an ash tree and rocking in the stream. This boat belonged to Monsieur de Mortsauf, who used it for fishing.

"Well," said Monsieur de Chessel, when there was no danger of our being overheard, "I need not ask you if you have found the lady of the beautiful shoulders. You may be congratulated on the welcome you received from Monsieur

de Mortsauf. The deuce! Why, you have taken the citadel at a blow."

This speech, followed up by the remarks I before mentioned, revived my downcast spirit. I had not spoken a word since leaving Clochegourde, and my host ascribed my silence to happiness.

"How so?" said I, with a touch of irony, which might have seemed to be the outcome of restrained passion.

"He never in his life received any one so civilly."

"I may confess that I was myself astounded at his politeness," said I, feeling what bitterness lay behind his words.

Though I was too much inexperienced in the ways of the world to understand the cause of Monsieur de Chessel's animus, I was struck by the tone which betrayed it. My host was so unlucky as to be named Durand, and he made himself ridiculous by renouncing his father's name—that of a noted manufacturer who had made an immense fortune during the revolution, and whose wife was the sole heiress of the Chessel family, an old connection of lawyers risen from the citizen class under Henry IV., like most of the Paris magistracy.

Monsieur de Chessel, ambitious of the highest flight, wished to kill the primitive Durand to attain to the realms he dreamed of. He first called himself Durand de Chessel, then D. de Chessel, then he was Monsieur de Chessel. After the restoration he endowed an entail with the title of Count under letters-patent granted by Louis XVIII. His children culled the fruits of his audacity without knowing its magnitude. A speech made by a certain satirical prince long clung to his heels: "Monsieur de Chessel generally has something of the Durand about him," said his highness. And this witticism was long a joy in Touraine.

Parvenues are like monkeys, and not less dexterous. Seen from above we admire their agility in climbing; but when they have reached the top, nothing is to be seen but their more shameful side. The wrong side of my entertainer was

made of meanness puffed up with envy. He and a peerage are to this day points that cannot meet. To be pretentious and justify it is the insolence of strength; but a man who is beneath the pretentions he owns to is in a constantly ridiculous position, which affords a feast to petty minds. Now, Monsieur de Chessel has never walked in the straight path of a strong man; he has twice been elected deputy, twice rejected of the electors; one day director-general, the next nothing at all, not even préfet; and his successes and defeats have spoiled his temper and given him the acrid greed of an ambitious failure. Though a fine fellow, intelligent, and capable of high achievement, the spirit of envy perhaps—which gives zest to existence in Touraine, where the natives waste their brains in jealous spite—was fatal to him in the higher social spheres, where faces that frown at others' fortune are rarely popular, or sulky lips unready to pay compliments but apt at sarcasm. If he had wished for less, he might perhaps have gained more; but he, unfortunately, was always proud enough to insist on walking upright.

At the time of my visit, Monsieur de Chessel was in the dawn of his ambition, royalism smiled on him. He affected grand airs, perhaps, but to me he was the perfection of kindness. I liked him, too, for a very simple reason: under his roof I found peace for the first time in my life. The interest he took in me—little enough I dare say—seemed to me, the hapless outcast of my family, a model of paternal affection. The attentions of hospitality formed such a contrast with the indifference that had hitherto crushed me, that I showed childlike gratitude for being allowed to live unfettered and almost petted. The owners of Frapesle are indeed so intimately part of the dawn of my happiness that they dwell in my mind with the memories I love to live in. At a later time, in the very matter of the King's letters-patent, I had the satisfaction of doing my host some little service.

Monsieur de Chessel spent his fortune with an amount of

display that aggrieved some of his neighbors; he could buy fine horses and smart carriages; his wife dressed handsomely; he entertained splendidly; his servants were more numerous than the manners of the country demand; he affected the princely. The estate of Frapesle is vast.

So, as compared with his neighbor, and in the face of all this magnificence, the Comte de Mortsauf, reduced to the family coach, which in Touraine is a cross between a mail-cart and a post-chaise, compelled, too, by his lack of fortune, to make Clochegourde pay, was a tourangeau, a mere gentleman farmer, until the day when royal favor restored his family to unhoped-for dignity. The welcome he had extended to me, the younger son of an impoverished family, whose coat-of-arms dates from the Crusades, had been calculated to throw contempt on the wealth, the woods, the farms and meadows of his neighbor, a man of no birth.

Monsieur de Chessel had quite understood the Count. Indeed, their intercourse had always been polite, but without the daily exchange, the friendly intimacy which might have existed between Clochegourde and Frapesle, two domains divided only by the river, and whose mistresses could signal to each other from their windows.

Jealousy, however, was not the only reason for the Comte de Mortsauf's solitary life. His early education had been that given to most boys of good family—an insufficient and superficial smattering, on which were grafted the lessons of the world, court manners, and the exercise of high court functions, or some position of dignity. Monsieur de Mortsauf had emigrated just when this second education should have begun, and so missed it. He was one of those who believed in the early restoration of the monarchy in France; in this conviction he had spent the years of exile in lamentable idleness. Then, when Condé's army was broken up, after the Count's courage had marked him as one of its most devoted soldiers, he still counted on returning ere long with the white standard,

and never attempted, like many of the *émigrés*, to lead an industrious life. Perhaps he could not bear to renounce his name in order to earn his bread in the sweat of the toil he despised.

His hopes, always held over till the morrow, and a sense of honor, too, kept him from engaging in the service of a foreign power.

Suffering undermined his strength. Long expeditions on foot without sufficient food, and hopes for ever deceived, injured his health and discouraged his spirit. By degrees his poverty became extreme. Though to some men misfortune is a tonic, there are others to whom it is destruction, and the Count was one of these. When I think of this unhappy gentleman of Touraine, wandering and sleeping on the high-roads in Hungary, sharing a quarter of a sheep with Prince Esterhazy's shepherds—from whom the traveler could beg a loaf which the gentleman would not have accepted from their master, and which he many a time refused at the hands of the foes of France—I could never harbor a bitter feeling against the *émigré*, not even when I saw him ridiculous in his day of triumph.

Monsieur de Mortsauf's white hair had spoken to me of terrible sufferings, and I sympathize with all exiles too strongly to condemn them. The Count's cheerfulness—Frenchman and tourangeau as he was—quite broke down; he became gloomy, fell ill, and was nursed out of charity in some German asylum. His malady was inflammation of the mesentery, which often proves fatal, and which, if cured, brings in its train a capricious temper and almost always hypochondria. His amours, buried in the most secret depths of his soul, where I alone ever unearthed them, were of a debasing character, and not only marred his life at the time, but ruined it for the future.

After twelve years' misery, he came back to France, whither Napoleon's decree enabled him to return. When, as he

crossed the Rhine on foot, he saw the steeple of Strasbourg one fine summer evening, he fainted away. "'France! France!' I cried. 'This is France!' as a child cries out 'Mother!' when it is hurt," he told me.

Born to riches, he was now poor; born to lead a regiment or govern the state, he had no authority, no prospects; born healthy and robust, he came home sick and worn out. Bereft of education in a country where men and things had been growing, without interest of any kind, he found himself destitute even of physical and moral strength. His want of fortune made his name a burden to him. His unshaken convictions, his former attachment to Condé, his woes, his memories, his ruined health, had given him a touchy susceptibility, which was likely to find small mercy in France, the land of banter. Half-dead, he got as far as le Maine, where, by some accident, due perhaps to the civil war, the revolutionary government had forgotten to sell a farm of considerable extent, which the farmer in possession had clung to, declaring that it was his own.

When the Lenoncourt family, living at Givry, a château not far from this farm, heard that the Comte de Mortsauf had come back, the Duc de Lenoncourt went to offer him shelter at Givry till he should have time to arrange his residence. The Lenoncourts were splendidly generous to the Count, who recovered his strength through several months' stay with them, making every effort to disguise his sufferings during this first interval of peace. The Lenoncourts had lost their enormous possessions. So far as name was concerned, the Comte de Mortsauf was a suitable match for their daughter; and Mademoiselle de Lenoncourt, far from being averse to marrying a man of five-and-thirty, old and ailing for his age, seemed quite content. Her marriage would allow her to live with her aunt, the Duchesse de Verneuil (sister to the Prince de Blamont-Chauvry), who was a second mother to the girl.

As the intimate friend of the Duchesse de Bourbon, Madame

de Verneuil was one of a saintly circle, whose soul was Monsieur de Saint-Martin, born in Touraine, and known as *le Philosophe inconnu* (the unrecognized philosopher). The disciples of this philosopher practiced the virtues inculcated by the lofty speculations of mystical Illuminism. This doctrine gives a key to the supernal worlds, accounts for life by a series of transmigrations through which man makes his way to sublime destinies, releases duty from its degradation by the law, views the woes of life with the placid fortitude of the Quaker, and enjoins contempt of pain, by infusing a mysterious maternal regard for the angel within us which we must bear up to heaven. It is stoicism looking for future life. Earnest prayer and pure love are the elements of this creed, which, born in the catholicism of the Roman Church, reverts to the bosom of primitive Christianity.

Mademoiselle de Lenoncourt remained attached, however, to the apostolic church, to which her aunt was equally faithful. Cruelly tried by the storms of the revolution, the Duchesse de Verneuil had, toward the close of her life, assumed a hue of impassioned piety which overflowed into the soul of her beloved niece with "the light of heavenly love and the oil of spiritual joy," to use the words of Saint-Martin. This man of peace and virtuous learning was several times the Countess' guest at Clochegourde after her aunt's death; to her he had been a constant visitor. When staying at Clochegourde, Saint-Martin could superintend the printing of his latest works by Letourney of Tours.

Madame de Verneuil, with the inspiration of wisdom that comes to old women who have experienced the storms of life, gave Clochegourde to the young wife that she might have a home of her own. With the good grace of old people—which, when they are gracious, is perfection—she surrendered the whole house to her niece, reserving only one room, over that she had formerly used, which was taken by the Countess. Her almost sudden death cast a shroud over the joys of the

united household, and left a permanent tinge of sadness on Clochegourde as well as on the young wife's superstitious soul. The early days of her married life in Touraine were to the Countess the only period, not indeed of happiness, but of light-heartedness in all her life.

After the miseries of his life in exile, Monsieur de Mortsauf, thankful to foresee a sheltered existence in the future, went through a sort of healing of the spirit; he inhaled in this valley the intoxicating fragrance of blossoming hope. Being obliged to consider ways and means, he threw himself into agricultural enterprise, and at first found some delight in it; but Jacques' birth came like a lightning stroke, blighting the present and the future; the physician pronounced that the child could not live. The Count carefully concealed this sentence of doom from his wife; then he himself consulted a doctor, and had none but crushing answers, confirmed as to their purport by Madeleine's birth.

These two events, and a sort of inward conviction as to the inevitable end, added to the Count's ill-health. His name extinct; his young wife, pure and blameless but unhappy in her marriage, doomed to the anxieties of motherhood without knowing its joys—all this *humus* of his past life, filled with the germs of fresh sufferings, fell on his heart and crowned his misery.

The Countess read the past in the present, and foresaw the future. Though there is nothing so difficult as to make a man happy who feels where he has failed, the Countess attempted the task worthy of an angel. In one day she became a stoic. After descending into the abyss whence she could still see the heavens, she devoted herself, for one man, to the mission which a sister of charity undertakes for the sake of all; and to reconcile him with himself, she forgave him what he could not forgive himself. The Count grew avaricious, she accepted the consequent privations; he dreaded being imposed upon, as men do whose knowledge of the world has filled them with

repulsions, and she resigned herself to solitude and to his distrust of men without a murmur; she used all a woman's wiles to make him wish for what was right, and he thus credited himself with ideas and enjoyed in his home the pleasures of superiority which he could not have known elsewhere.

Finally, having inured herself to the path of married life, she determined never to leave her home at Clochegourde; for she perceived in her husband a hysterical nature whose eccentricities, in a neighborhood so full of envy and gossip, might be interpreted to the injury of their children. Thus nobody had a suspicion of Monsieur de Mortsauf's incapacity and aberrations; she had clothed the ruin with a thick hanging of ivy. The Count's uncertain temper, not so much discontented as malcontent, found in his wife a soft and soothing bed on which it might repose, its secret sufferings alleviated by cooling dews.

This sketch is a mere outline of the facts repeated by Monsieur de Chessel under the promptings of private spite. His experience of the world had enabled him to unravel some of the mysteries lurking at Clochegourde. But though Madame de Mortsauf's sublime attitude might deceive the world, it could not cheat the alert wits of love.

When I found myself alone in my little bedroom, an intuition of the truth made me start up in bed. I could not endure to be at Frapesle when I might be gazing at the windows of her room. I dressed myself, stole downstairs, and got out of the house by a side-door in a tower where there was a spiral stair. The fresh night air composed my spirit. I crossed the Indre by the Moulin-Rouge bridge, and presently got into the heaven-sent little boat opposite Clochegourde, where a light shone in the end window toward Azay.

Here I fell back on my old dreams, but peaceful now, and soothed by the warbling of the songster of lovers' nights and the single note of the reed-warbler. Ideas stole through my brain like ghosts, sweeping away the clouds which till now

had darkened the future. My mind and senses alike were under the spell. With what passion did my longing go forth to her! How many times did I repeat, like a madman, "Will she be mine?"

If, during the last few days, the universe had expanded before me, now, in one night, it gained a centre. All my will, all my ambitions were bound up in her; I longed to be all I might for her sake and to fill and heal her aching heart. How lovely was that night spent below her window, in the midst of murmurous waters, plashing over the mill-wheels, and broken by the sound of the clock at Saché as it told the hours. In that night, so full of radiance, when that starry flower illumined my life, I plighted my soul to her with the faith of the hapless Castilian knight whom we laugh at in Cervantes—the faith of the beginnings of love.

At the first streak of dawn in the sky, the first piping bird, I fled to the park of Frapesle; no early country yokel saw me, no one suspected my escapade, and I slept till the bell rang for breakfast.

Notwithstanding the heat, when breakfast was over I went down to the meadow to see the Indre and its islets once more, the valley and its downs of which I professed myself an ardent admirer; but, with a swiftness of foot which might defy that of a runaway horse, I went back to my boat, my willows, and my Clochegourde. All was still and quivering, as the country is at noon. The motionless foliage was darkly defined against the blue sky; such insects as live in sunshine—green dragon-flies and iridescent flies—hovered round the ash trees and over the reeds; the herds chewed the cud in the shade, the red earth glowed in the vineyards, and snakes wriggled over the banks. What a change in the landscape that I had left so cool and coy before going to sleep!

On a sudden I leaped out of the punt, and went up the road to come down behind Clochegourde, for I fancied I had

seen the Count come out. I was not mistaken; he was skirting a hedge, going no doubt toward a gate opening on to the Azay road by the side of the river.

"How are you this morning, Monsieur le Comte?"

He looked at me with a pleased expression. He did not often hear himself thus addressed.

"Quite well," said he. "You must be very fond of the country to walk out in this heat?"

"Was I not sent here to live in the open air?"

"Well, then, will you come and see them reaping my rye?"

"With pleasure," said I. "But I am, I must confess to you, deplorably ignorant. I do not know rye from wheat, nor a poplar from an aspen; I know nothing of field-work, nor of the ways of tilling the land."

"Well, then, come along," said he gleefully, turning back by the hedge. "Come by the little upper gate."

He walked along inside the hedge, and I outside.

"You will never learn anything from Monsieur de Chessel," said he; "he is much too fine a gentleman to trouble himself beyond looking through his steward's accounts."

So he showed me his yards and outbuildings, his flower-garden, orchards, and kitchen-gardens. Finally, he led me along the avenue of acacias and ailanthus on the river-bank, where, at the further end, I saw Madame de Mortsauf and the two children.

A woman looks charming under the play of the frittered, quivering tracery of leaves. Somewhat surprised, no doubt, by my early visit, she did not move, knowing that we should go to her. The Count bid me admire the view of the valley, which, from thence, wore quite a different aspect from any I had seen from the heights. You might have thought yourself in a corner of Switzerland. The meadow-land, channeled by the brooks that tumble into the Indre, stretches far into the distance, and is lost in mist. On the

side toward Montvazon spreads a wide extent of verdure; everywhere else the eye is checked by hills, clumps of trees, and rocks.

We hastened our steps to greet Madame de Mortsauf, who suddenly dropped the book in which Madeleine was reading, and took Jacques on her knee, in a fit of spasmodic coughing.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked the Count, turning pale.

"He has a relaxed throat," said the mother, who did not seem to see me; "it will be nothing."

She was supporting his head and his back, and from her eyes shot two rays that infused life into the poor feeble boy.

"You are extraordinarily rash," said the Count sharply; "you expose him to a chill from the river and let him sit on a stone bench!"

"But, father, the bench is burning," cried Madeleine.

"They were stifling up above," said the Countess.

"Women will always be in the right!" said he, turning to me.

To avoid encouraging or offending him by a look I gazed at Jacques, who complained of a pain in his throat, and his mother carried him away. As she went, she could hear her husband say—

"When a mother has such sickly children, she ought to know how to take care of them."

Hideously unjust, but his self-conceit prompted him to justify himself at his wife's expense.

The Countess flew on, up slopes and steps; she disappeared through the glazed door.

Monsieur de Mortsauf had seated himself on the bench, his head bent, lost in thought; my position was intolerable; he neither looked at me nor spoke. Good-by to the walk during which I meant to make such way in his good graces. I cannot remember ever in my life to have spent a more horrible quarter of an hour. I was bathed in perspiration as I considered—

"Shall I leave him? Shall I stay?" I was bewildered.

How many gloomy thoughts must have filled his brain to make him forget to go and inquire how Jacques was! Suddenly he arose and came up to me. We turned together to look at the smiling scene.

"We will put off our walk until another day, Monsieur le Comte," I said gently.

"Nay, let us go," said he. "I am, unfortunately, used to see such attacks—and I would give my life without a regret to save the child's."

"Jacques is better now, my dear; he is asleep," said the golden voice. Madame de Mortsauf appeared at the end of the walk; she had come back without rancor or bitterness, and she returned my bow. "I am pleased to see that you like Clochegourde," she said to me.

"Would you like me to go on horseback to fetch Monsieur Deslandes, my dear?" said he, with an evident desire to win forgiveness for his injustice.

"Do not be anxious," replied she. "Jacques did not sleep last night, that is all. The child is very nervous; he had a bad dream, and I spent the time telling him stories to send him to sleep again. His cough is entirely nervous. I have soothed it with a gum lozenge, and he has fallen asleep."

"Poor dear!" said he, taking her hand in both his, and looking at her with moistened eyes. "I knew nothing of it."

"Why worry you about trifles? Go and look at your rye. You know that if you are not on the spot the farmers will let gleaners who do not belong to the place clear the fields before the sheaves are carried."

"I am going to take my first lesson in farming, madame," said I.

"You have come to a good master," replied she, looking at the Count, whose lips were pursed into the prim smile of satisfaction commonly known as *la bouche en cœur* (kiss-lips).

Not until two months later did I know that she had spent

that night in dreadful anxiety, fearing that her son had the croup. And I was in the punt, softly lulled by dreams of love, fancying that from her window she might see me adoring the light of the taper which shone on her brow furrowed by mortal fears.

As we reached the gate, the Count said in a voice full of emotion, "Madame de Mortsauf is an angel!"

The words staggered me. I knew the family but slightly as yet, and the natural remorse that comes over a youthful soul in such circumstances cried out to me—

"What right have you to disturb this perfect peace?"

The Count, enchanted to have for his audience a youth over whom he could so cheaply triumph, began talking of the future prospects of France under the return of the Bourbons. We chatted discursively, and I was greatly surprised at the strangely childish things he said. He was ignorant of facts as well proven as geometry; he was suspicious of well-informed persons; he had no belief in superiority; he laughed at progress, not perhaps without reason; and I found in him a vast number of sensitive chords compelling me to take so much care not to wound him that a long conversation was a labor to the mind. When I had thus laid a finger on his failings, I felt my way with as much pliancy as the Countess showed in coaxing them. At a later stage of my life I should undoubtedly have fretted him; but I was as timid as a child, and thinking that I myself knew nothing, or that men of experience knew everything, I was amazed at the wonders worked at Clochegourde by this patient husbandman. I heard his plans with admiration. Finally—a piece of involuntary flattery which won me the good gentleman's affections—I envied him this pretty estate so beautifully situated, as an earthly paradise far superior to Frapesle, the demesne of de Chessel.

"Frapesle," said I, "is a massive piece of plate, but Clochegourde is a casket of precious gems."

A speech that he constantly repeated, quoting me as the author.

"Well," said he, "before we came here it was a wilderness."

I was all ears when he talked of his crops and nursery plantations. New to a country life, I overwhelmed him with questions as to the price of things and the processes of agriculture, and he seemed delighted to have to tell me so much.

"What on earth do they teach you?" he asked in surprise.

And on that very first day, on going in, he whispered to his wife—

"Monsieur Félix is a charming young fellow."

In the afternoon I wrote to my mother to tell her I should remain at Frapesle, and begged her to send me clothes and linen.

Knowing nothing of the great revolution that was going on, and of the influence it was to exert over my destinies, I supposed that I should return to Paris to finish my studies, and the law schools would not reopen till early in November; so I had two months and a half before me.

During the first days of my stay I tried in vain to attach myself to the Count, and it was a time of painful shocks. I detected in this man a causeless irritability and a swiftness to act in cases that were hopeless which frightened me. Now and then there were sudden resuscitations of the brave gentleman who had fought so well under Condé, parabolic flashes of a will which, in a day of critical moment, might tear through policy like a bursting shell, and which in some opportunity for resolution and courage may make an Elbée, a Bonchamp, a Charette of a man condemned to live on his acres. The mere mention of certain possibilities would make his nose quiver and his brow clear, while his eyes flashed lightnings that at once died out. I feared lest Monsieur

de Mortsauf, if he should read the language of my eyes, might kill me on the spot.

At this period of my life I was only tender; will, which affects a man so strangely, was but just dawning in me. My vehement longing had given me a swiftly responsive sensitiveness that was like a thrill of fear. I did not tremble at the prospect of a struggle, but I did not want to die till I had known the happiness of reciprocated love. My difficulties and my desires grew in parallel lines.

How can I describe my feelings? I was a prey to heart-rending perplexities. I hoped for a chance, I watched for it; I made friends with the children, and won them to love me; I tried to identify myself with the interests of the household.

By degrees the Count was less on his guard in my presence; then I learned to know his sudden changes of temper, his fits of utter, causeless dejection, his gusts of rebelliousness, his bitter and harsh complaining, his impulses of controlled madness, his childish whining, his groans as of a man in despair, his unexpected rages. Moral nature differs from physical nature, inasmuch as nothing in it is final. The intensity of effect is in proportion to the character acted on, or to the ideas that may be associated with an action. My continuing at Clochegourde, my whole future life depended on this fantastic will.

I could never express to you the anguish that weighed on my soul—as ready at that time to expand as to shrink—when on going in I said to myself, "How will he receive me?" What anxious fears crushed my heart when I descried a storm lowering on that snow-crowned brow! I was perpetually on the alert. Thus I was a slave to this man's tyranny, and my own torments enabled me to understand those of Madame de Mortsauf.

We began to exchange glances of intelligence, and my tears would sometimes rise when she repressed hers. Thus

the Countess and I tested each other through sorrow. I made many discoveries in the course of the first six weeks—forty days of real annoyance, of silent joys, of hopes now enguifed and now rising to the top.

One evening I found her piously meditative as she looked at a sunset, which crimsoned the heights with so voluptuous a blush, the valley spread below it like a bed, that it was impossible not to understand the voice of this eternal Song of Songs by which nature bids her creatures love. Was the girl dreaming of illusions now flown? Was the woman feeling the pangs of some secret comparison? I fancied I saw in her languid attitude a favorable opening for a first avowal. I said to her—

"Some days are so hard to live through."

"You have read my mind," replied she. "But how?"

"We have so many points of contact," said I. "Are we not both of the privileged few, keen to suffer and to enjoy—in whom every sensitive fibre thrills in unison to produce an echoing chord of feeling, and whose nervous system dwells in constant harmony with the first principle of things? Such beings, placed in a discordant medium, suffer torture, just as their enjoyment rises to an ecstacy when they meet with ideas, sensations, or persons that they find sympathetic.

"And for us there is a third condition, of which the woes are known only to souls suffering from the same malady, and endowed with brotherly intelligence. We are capable of having impressions that are neither pleasure nor pain. Then an expressive instrument, gifted with life, is stirred in a void within us, is impassioned without an object, gives forth sounds without melody, utters words that die in the silence—a dreadful contradiction in souls that rebel against the uselessness of a vacuum; a terrible sport in which all our power is spent without nutrition, like blood from some internal wound. Our emotion flows in torrents, leaving us unutterably weak, in a speechless dejection for which the confessional has no ear.

Have I not expressed the sufferings we both are familiar with?"

She shivered, and, still gazing at the sunset, she replied—

"How do you, who are so young, know these things? Were you once a woman?"

"Ah!" said I, with some agitation, "my childhood was like one long illness?"

"I hear Madeleine coughing," said she, hastily leaving me.

The Countess had seen me constant in my attentions to her, without taking offense, for two reasons. In the first place, she was as pure as a child and her thoughts never wandered to evil. And then I amused the Count; I was food for this lion without claws or mane. For I had hit on a pretext for my visits which was plausible to all. I could not play backgammon; Monsieur de Mortsauf offered to teach me, and I accepted.

At the moment when this bargain was made, the Countess could not help giving me a pitying look, as much as to say, "Well, you are rushing into the wolf's jaws!"

If I had failed to understand this at first, by the third day I knew to what I had committed myself. My patience, which as a result of my child-life is inexhaustible, was matured during this time of discipline. To the Count it was a real joy to be cruelly sarcastic when I failed to practice some rule or principle he had explained to me; if I paused to reflect he complained of my slow play; if I played quickly, he hated to be hurried; if I left blots, while taking advantage of it, he said I was too hasty. It was the despotism of a schoolmaster, the bullying of the cane, of which I can only give you a notion by comparing myself to Epictetus made a slave to a malicious child.

When we played for money, his constant winnings gave him mean and degrading joy; then a word from his wife made up to me for everything, and brought him back to a sense of decency and politeness. But ere long I fell into the

torments of a fiery furnace I had not foreseen : at this rate my pocket-money was melting.

Though the Count always remained between his wife and me till I took my leave, sometimes at a late hour, I always hoped to find a moment when I might steal into her heart ; but in order to attain that hour, watched for with the painful patience of a sportsman, I saw that I must persevere in these weariful games, through which I endured mental misery and which were winning away all my money !

Many a time had we sat in silence, watching an effect of the sun on the meadows, of the clouds in a gray sky, the blue misty hills, or the quivering moonbeams on the gem-like play of the river, without uttering a word beyond—

" What a beautiful night ! "

" Madame, the night is a woman."

" And what peace ! "

" Yes ; it is impossible to be altogether unhappy here.'

At this reply she returned to her worsted-work. I had in fact understood the yearnings of her inmost self stirred by an affection that insisted on its rights.

Without money my evenings were at an end. I wrote to my mother to send me some ; my mother scolded me, and would give me none for a week. To whom could I apply ! And it was a matter of life or death to me !

Thus at the very beginning of my first great happiness I again felt the sufferings which had always pursued me ; in Paris, at school, I had evaded them by melancholy abstinence, my woes were only negative ; at Frapesle they were active ; I now knew that longing to steal, those dreamed-of crimes and horrible frenzies which blast the soul, and which we are bound to stifle or lose all self-respect. My remembrance of the miserable reflections, the anguish inflicted on me by my mother's parsimony, have given me that holy indulgence for young men which those must feel who, without having fallen, have stood on the edge of the gulf and sounded the abyss. Though

my honesty, watered with cold sweats, stood firm at those moments when the waters of life part and show the stony depths of its bed, whenever human justice draws her terrible sword on a man's neck, I say to myself, "Penal laws were made by those who never knew want."

In this dire extremity I found in Monsieur de Chessel's library a treatise on backgammon, and this I studied; then my host was good enough to give me a few lessons. Under milder tuition I made some progress and could apply the rules and calculations which I learned by heart. In a few days I was able to beat my master. But when I won he waxed furious; his eyes glared like a tiger's, his face twitched, his brows worked as I never saw any other's work. His fractiousness was like that of a spoilt child. Sometimes he would fling the dice across the room, rage and stamp, bite the dice-box, and abuse me. But this violence had to be stopped. As soon as I could play a good game, I disposed of the battle as I pleased. I arranged it so that we should come out nearly even at the end, allowing him to win at the beginning of the evening, and restoring the balance in the latter games.

The end of the world would have amazed the Count less than his pupil's sudden proficiency; but, in fact, he never perceived it. The regular result of our play was a novelty that bewildered his mind.

"My poor brain is tired, no doubt," he would say. "You always win at the finish, because by that time I have exhausted my powers."

The Countess, who knew the game, detected my purpose from the first, and saw in it an evidence of immense affection. These details can only be appreciated by those to whom the extreme difficulty of backgammon is known. How much this trifle betrayed! But love, like God as depicted by Bossuet, regards the poor man's cup of water, the struggle of the soldier who dies inglorious, as far above the most profitable victories.

The Countess gave me one of those looks of silent gratitude that overpower a youthful heart: she bestowed on me such a glance as she reserved for her children. From that thrice-blessed evening she always looked at me when she spoke to me.

I could never find words for my state of mind when I left. My soul had absorbed my body. I weighed nothing, I did not walk—I floated. I felt within me still that look that had bathed me in glory, just as her "Good-night, monsieur," had echoed in my soul like the harmonies of the "O filii, O filiæ!" of the Easter benediction. I was born to new life. I was something to her, then!

I slept in wrappings of purple. Flames danced before my closed eyes, chasing each other in the dark like the pretty bright sparks that run over charred paper. And in my dreams her voice seemed something tangible—an atmosphere that lapped me in light and fragrance, a melody that lulled my spirit.

Next day her welcome conveyed the full expression of the feelings she bestowed on me, and thenceforth I knew every secret of her tones.

That day was to be one of the most noteworthy of my life. After dinner we went for a walk on the downs and up to a common where nothing would grow; the soil was strong and dry, with no vegetable mold. There were, however, a few oaks, and some bushes covered with sloes; but instead of grass, the ground was carpeted with curled brown lichen, bright in the rays of the setting sun, and slippery under foot. I held Madeleine by the hand to keep her from falling, and Madame de Mortsauf gave Jacques her arm. The Count, who led the way, suddenly struck the earth with his stick, and, turning round, exclaimed in a terrible tone—

"Such has my life been! Oh, before I knew you," he added, with an apologetic glance at his wife. But it was too

late, the Countess had turned pale. What woman would not have staggered under such a blow?

"What delightful perfumes reach us here and what wonderful effects of light!" cried I. "I should like to own this common; I might perhaps find riches if I dug into it; but the most certain advantage would be living near you. But who would not pay highly for a view, so soothing to the eye, of that winding river in which the soul may bathe among ash trees and birch. That shows how tastes differ! To you this spot of land is a common; to me it is a paradise."

She thanked me with a look.

"Rhodomontade!" said he in a bitter tone. Then, interrupting himself, he said, "Do you hear the bells of Azay? I can positively hear the bells."

Madame de Mortsauf glanced at me with an expression of alarm, Madeleine clutched my hand.

"Shall we go home and play a hit?" said I. "The rattle of the dice will hinder you from hearing the bells."

We returned to Clochegourde, talking at intervals. When we went into the drawing-room we sat in indefinable indecision. The Count had sunk into an arm-chair, lost in thought, and undisturbed by his wife, who knew the symptoms of his malady and could foresee an attack. I was not less silent. She did not bid me leave, perhaps because she thought that a game of backgammon would amuse the Count and scare away this dreadful nervous irritation, for its outbreaks half-killed her.

Nothing was more difficult than to persuade the Count to play his game of backgammon, though he always longed for it. Like a mincing coquette, he had to be entreated and urged, so as not to seem under any obligation, perhaps because he felt that he was. If, at the end of some interesting conversation, I forgot to go through my *salamelek*, he was sulky, sharp, and offensive, and showed his annoyance by contradicting everything that was said. Then, warned by his

fractiousness, I would propose a game, and he would play the coquette.

"It was too late," he would say, "and, beside, I did not really care for it." In short, no end of airs and graces, like a woman whose real wishes you cannot at last be sure of. I was humble, and besought him to give me practice in a science so easily forgotten for lack of exercise.

On this occasion I had to affect the highest spirits to persuade him to play. He complained of giddiness that hindered his calculations, his brain was crushed in a vice, he had a singing in his ears, he was suffocating, and sighed and groaned. At last he consented to come to the table. Madame de Mortsauf then left us to put the children to bed and to read prayers for the household. All went well during her absence; I contrived that Monsieur de Mortsauf should win, and his success restored his good humor. The sudden transition from a state of depression, in which he had given utterance to the most gloomy anticipations for himself, to this joviality like that of a drunken man, and to crazy, irrational mirth, distressed and terrified me. I had never seen him so frankly and unmistakably beside himself. Our intimacy had borne fruit; he was no longer on his guard with me. Day by day he tried to involve me in his tyranny, and find in me fresh food for his humors—for it really would seem that mental disorders are living things, with appetites and instincts, and a craving to extend the limits of their dominion as a landowner seeks to enlarge his borders.

The Countess came down again and drew near the backgammon table for a better light on her work, but she sat down to her frame with ill-disguised apprehension. An unlucky move, which I could not avoid, changed the Count's face; from cheerful it became gloomy, from purple it turned yellow, and his eyes wandered. Then came another blow which I could neither foresee nor make good. Monsieur de Mortsauf threw a fatally bad number which ruined him. He started

D. MURRAY SMITH

HE STARTED UP, THREW THE TABLE OVER ME AND THE LAMP ON THE GROUND.

up, threw the table over me and the lamp on the ground, struck his fist on the console, and leaped—for I cannot say he walked—up and down the room. The rush of abuse, oaths, and ejaculations that he poured out was enough to make one think that he was possessed, according to mediæval belief. Imagine my position.

"Go out into the garden," said she, pressing my hand.

I went without the Count's noticing that I was gone.

From the terrace, whither I slowly made my way, I could hear his loud tones, and groans coming from his bedroom, adjoining the dining-room. Above the tempest I could also hear the voice of an angel, audible now and then like the song of the nightingale when the storm is passing over. I wandered up and down under the acacias on that exquisite night late in August, waiting for the Countess. She would come; her manner had promised it. For some days an explanation had been in the air between us, and must inevitably come at the first word that should unseal the overfull well in our hearts. What bashfulness retarded the hour of our perfect understanding? Perhaps she loved, as I did, the thrill, almost like the stress of fear, which quenches emotion at those moments when we hold down the gushing overflow of life, when we are as shy of revealing our inmost soul as a maiden bride of unveiling to the husband she loves. The accumulation of our thoughts had magnified this first and necessary confession on both sides.

An hour stole away. I was sitting on the brick parapet when the sound of her footstep, mingling with the rustle of her light dress, fluttered the evening air. It was one of the sensations at which the heart stands still.

"Monsieur de Mortsauf is asleep," said she. "When he has one of these attacks I give him a cup of tea made of poppy-heads, and the crisis is rare enough for the simple remedy always to take effect. Monsieur," she went on, with a change of tone to the most persuasive key, "an unfortunate

accident has put you in possession of secrets which have hitherto been carefully kept; promise me to bury in your heart every memory of this scene. Do this for my sake, I beg of you. I do not ask you to swear it; the simple *Yes* of a man of honor will amply satisfy me."

"Need I even say *Yes?*" I asked. "Have we failed to understand each other?"

"Do not form an unjust opinion of Monsieur de Mortsauf from seeing the result of much suffering endured in exile," she went on. "He will have entirely forgotten by to-morrow all he said to you, and you will find him quite kind and affectionate."

"Nay, madame," said I, "you need not justify the Count. I will do exactly what you will. I would this instant throw myself into the Indre if I could thus make a new man of Monsieur de Mortsauf, and give you a life of happiness. The only thing I cannot do is to alter my opinion, nothing is more essentially a part of me. I would give my life for you; I cannot sacrifice my conscience; I may refuse to listen to it, but can I hinder its speaking? Now, in my opinion, Monsieur de Mortsauf is——"

"I quite understand you," she said, interrupting me to mitigate the idea of insanity by softening the expression. "The Count is as nervous as a lady with the megrims; but it occurs only at long intervals, at most once a year, when the heat is greatest. How much evil the emigration brought in its train! How many noble lives were wrecked! He, I am sure, would have been a distinguished officer and an honor to his country——"

"I know it," I replied, interrupting in my turn, to show her that it was vain to try to deceive me.

She paused and laid a hand on my brow, saying with great earnestness:

"Who has thus thrown you into our midst? Has God intended me to find a help in you, a living friendship to lean

upon?" she went on, firmly grasping my hand. "For you are kind and generous——"

She looked up to heaven as if to invoke some visible evidence that should confirm her secret hopes; then she bent her eyes on me. Magnetized by that gaze which shed her soul into mine, I failed in tact by every rule of worldly guidance; but to some souls is not such precipitancy a magnanimous haste to meet danger, an eagerness to prevent disaster and dread of a misfortune that may never come; is it not more often the abrupt question of heart to heart, a blow struck to find out whether they ring in unison?

Many thoughts flashed through me like light, and counseled me to wash out the stain that soiled my innocency even at the moment when I hoped for full initiation.

"Before going any further," said I, in a voice quavering from my heart-beats, audible in the deep silence, "allow me to purify one memory of the past——"

"Be silent," said she hastily, and laying a finger on my lips for an instant. She looked at me loftily, like a woman who stands too high for slander to reach her, and said in a broken voice, "I know to what you allude—the first and last and only insult ever offered me! Never speak of that ball. Though as a Christian I have forgiven you, the woman still smarts under it."

"Do not be less merciful than God," said I, my eyelashes retaining the tears that rose to my eyes.

"I have a right to be more severe; I am weaker," replied she.

"But hear me," I cried, with a sort of childish indignation, "even if it be for the first and last and only time in your life."

"Well," said she, "speak then! Otherwise you will fancy that I am afraid to hear you."

I felt that this hour was unique in our lives, and I told her, in a way to command belief, "that every woman at that ball

had been as indifferent to me as every other I had hitherto seen; but that when I saw her—I who had spent my life in study, whose spirit was so far from bold—I had been swept away by a sort of frenzy which could only be condemned by those who had never known it; that the heart of man had never been so overflowing with such desire as no living being can resist, and which conquers all things, even death——"

"And scorn?" said she, interrupting me.

"What, you scorned me!" said I.

"Talk no more of these things," said she.

"Nay, let us talk of them," replied I, in the excitement of superhuman anguish. "It concerns my whole being, my unknown life; it is a secret you must hear, or else I must die of despair! And does it not concern you, too—you who, without knowing it, are the lady in whose hand shines the crown held out to the conqueror in the lists?"

I told her the story of my childhood and youth, not as I have related it to you, calmly judged from a distance, but in the words of a young man whose wounds are still bleeding. My voice rang like the axe of the woodman in a forest. The dead years fell crashing down before it, and the long misery that had crowned them with leafless boughs. In fevered words I described to her a thousand odious details that I have spared you. I displayed the treasury of my splendid hopes, the virgin gold of my desires, a burning heart kept hot under the Alps of ice piled up through a perpetual winter. And then, when, crushed by the burden of my griefs uttered with the fire of an Isaiah, I waited for a word from the woman who had heard me with a downcast head, she lightened the darkness with a look, and vivified the worlds earthly and divine by one single sentence.

"Our childhood was the same," said she, showing me a face bright with the halo of martyrdom.

After a pause, during which our souls were wedded by the same consoling thought, "Then I was not the only one to

suffer!" The Countess told me, in the tones she kept for her children, how luckless she had been as a girl when the boys were dead. She explained the difference, made by her condition as a girl always at her mother's skirt, between her miseries and those of a boy flung into the world of school. My isolation had been a paradise in comparison with the grinding millstone under which her spirit was perennially bruised, until the day when her true mother, her devoted aunt, had saved her by rescuing her from the torture of which she described the ever-new terrors. It was a course of those indescribable goading pricks that are intolerable to a nervous nature which can face a direct thrust, but dies daily under the sword of Damocles—a generous impulse quashed by a stern command; a kiss coldly accepted; silence first enjoined and then found fault with; tears repressed that lay heavy on her heart; in short, all the petty tyranny of convent discipline hidden from the eyes of the world behind a semblance of proud and sentimental motherhood. Her mother was vain of her and boasted of her; but she paid dearly afterward for the praise bestowed only for the glory of her teacher. When, by dint of docility and sweetness, she fancied she had softened her mother's heart and opened her own, the tyrant armed herself with her confessions. A spy would have been less cowardly and treacherous.

All her girlish pleasures and festivals had cost her dear, for she was scolded for having enjoyed them as much as for a fault. The lessons of her admirable education had never been given with love, but always with cruel irony. She owed her mother no grudge, she only blamed herself for loving her less than she feared her. Perhaps, the angel thought, this severity had really been necessary. Had it not prepared her for her present life?

She paused.

As I listened to her, I felt as though the harp of Job, from which I had struck some wild chords, was now touched by

Christian fingers, and responded with the chanted liturgy of the Virgin at the foot of the cross.

"We dwelt in the same sphere," I exclaimed emphatically, "before meeting here, you coming from the East and I from the West."

She shook her head with desperate agitation: "The East is for you and the West is for me," said she. "You will live happy, I shall die of grief! Men make the conditions of their life themselves; my lot is cast once for all. No power can break the ponderous chain to which a wife is bound by a ring of gold, the emblem of her purity."

Feeling now that we were twins of the same nurture, she could not conceive of semi-confidences between sister souls that had drunk of the same spring. After the natural sigh of a guileless heart opening for the first time, she told me the story of the early days of her married life, her first disillusionment, all the renewal of her sorrows. She, like me, had gone through those trivial experiences which are so great to spirits whose limpid nature is shaken through and through by the slightest shock, as a stone flung into a lake stirs the depths as well as the surface.

When she married she had some savings, the little treasure which represents the happy hours, the thousand trifles a young wife may wish for; one day of dire need she had generously given the whole sum to her husband, not telling him that these were not gold-pieces, but remembrances; he had never taken any account of it; he did not feel himself her debtor. Nor had she seen in return for her treasure, sunk in the sleeping waters of oblivion, the moistened eye which pays every debt, and is to a generous soul like a perpetual gem whose rays sparkle in the darkest day.

And she had gone on from sorrow to sorrow. Monsieur de Mortsauf would forget to give her money for housekeeping; he woke up as from a dream when she asked for it, after overcoming a woman's natural shyness; never once had he spared

her this bitter experience! Then what terrors had beset her at the moment when this worn-out man had first shown symptoms of his malady! The first outbreak of his frenzied rage had completely crushed her. What miserable meditations must she have known before she understood that her husband—the impressive figure that presides over a woman's whole life—was a nonentity! What anguish had come on her after the birth of her two children! What a shock on seeing the scarcely living infants! What courage she must have had to say to herself, "I will breathe life into them; they shall be born anew day by day!" And then the despair of finding an obstacle in the heart and hand whence a wife looks for help!

She had seen this expanse of woes stretching before her, a thorny wilderness, after every surmounted difficulty. From the top of each rock she had discovered new deserts to cross, till the day when she really knew her husband, knew her children's constitution, and the land she was to dwell in; till the day when, like the boy taken by Napoleon from the tender care of home, she had inured her feet to tramp through mire and snow, inured her forehead to flying bullets, and broken herself entirely to the passive obedience of a soldier. All these things, which I abridge for you, she related in their gloomy details, with all their adjuncts of cruel incidents, of conjugal defeats, and fruitless efforts.

"In short," she said in conclusion, "only a residence here of months would give you a notion of all the troubles the improvements at Clochegourde cost me, all the weary coaxing to persuade him to do the thing that is most useful for his interests. What childish malice possesses him whenever anything I may have advised is not an immediate success! How delighted he is to proclaim himself in the right! What patience I need when I hear continual complaints while I am killing myself to clear each hour of weeds, to perfume the air he breathes, to strew sand and flowers on the paths he has

beset with stones! My reward is this dreadful burden—'I am dying; life is a curse to me!'

"If he is so fortunate as to find visitors at home, all is forgotten; he is gracious and polite. Why can he not be the same to his family? I cannot account for this want of loyalty in a man who is sometimes chivalrous. He is capable of going off without a word, all the way to Paris, to get me a dress, as he did the other day for that ball. Miserly as he is in his housekeeping, he would be lavish for me if I would allow it. It ought to be just the other way; I want nothing, and the house expenses are heavy. In my anxiety to make him happy, and forgetting that I might be a mother, I perhaps gave him the habit of regarding me as his victim, whereas with a little flattery I might still manage him like a child if I would stoop to play so mean a part! But the interests of the household make it necessary that I should be as calm and austere as a statue of justice; and yet I, too, have a tender and effusive soul."

"But why," said I, "do you not avail yourself of your influence to be the mistress and guide him?"

"If I alone were concerned, I could never defy the stolid silence with which for hours he will oppose sound arguments, nor could I answer his illogical remarks—the reasoning of a child. I have no courage against weakness or childishness; they may hit me, and I shall make no resistance. I might meet force with force, but I have no power against those I pity. If I were required to compel Madeleine to do something that would save her life, we should die together. Pity relaxes all my fibres and weakens my sinews. And the violent shocks of the past ten years have undermined me; my nervous force, so often attacked, is sometimes deliquescent, nothing can restore it; the strength that weathered those storms is sometimes wanting. Yes, sometimes I am conquered.

"For want of rest and of sea-bathing, which would give tone to my whole system, I shall be worn out. Monsieur

de Mortsauf will kill me if he keeps on, and he will die of my death."

"Why do you not leave Clochegourde for a few months? Why should you and the children not go to the sea?"

"In the first place, Monsieur de Mortsauf would feel himself lost if I left him. Though he will not recognize the situation, he is aware of his state. The man and the invalid are at war in him, two different natures, whose antagonism accounts for many eccentricities. And, indeed, he has every reason to dread it; if I were absent, everything here would go wrong. You have seen, no doubt, that I am a mother perpetually on the watch to guard her brood against the hawk that hovers over them; a desperate task, increased by the cares required by Monsieur de Mortsauf, whose perpetual cry is, 'Where is madame?' But this is nothing. I am at the same time Jacques' tutor and Madeleine's governess. This again is nothing. I am steward and bookkeeper. You will some day know the full meaning of my words when I say that the management of an estate is here the most exhausting toil. We have but a small income in money, and our farms are worked on a system of half-profits which requires incessant superintendence. We ourselves must sell our corn, our beasts, and every kind of crop. Our competitors are our own farmers, who agree with the purchasers over their wine at the tavern, and fix a price after being before us in the market.

"I should tire you out if I were to tell you all the thousand difficulties of our husbandry. With all my vigilance, I cannot keep our farmers from manuring their lands from our middens; I can neither go to make sure that our bailiffs do not agree with them to cheat us when the crops are divided, nor can I know the best time to sell. And if you think how little memory Monsieur de Mortsauf can boast of, and what trouble it costs me to induce him to attend to business, you will understand what a load I have to carry, and the impossibility of setting it down even for a moment. If I went away, we

should be ruined. No one would listen to his orders; indeed, they are generally contradictory; then nobody is attached to him; he finds too much fault and is too despotic; and, like all weak natures, he is overready to listen to his inferiors, and so fails to inspire the affection that binds families together. If I left the house, not a servant would stay a week.

"So you see I am as much rooted to Clochegourde as one of the leaden finials is to the roof. I have kept nothing from you, monsieur. The neighbors know nothing of the secrets of Clochegourde; you now know them all. Say nothing of the place but what is kind and pleasant, and you will earn my esteem—my gratitude," she added in a softened tone. "On these conditions you can always come to Clochegourde—you will find friends here."

"But I have never known what it is to suffer," exclaimed I. "You alone——"

"Nay," said she, with that resigned woman's smile that might melt granite, "do not be dismayed by my confidences. They show you life as it is, and not as your fancy had led you to hope. We all have our faults and our good points. If I had married a spendthrift, he would have ruined me. If I had been the wife of some ardent and dissipated youth, he would have been a favorite with women; perhaps he would have been unfaithful, and I should have died of jealousy. I am jealous!" she exclaimed in an excited tone that rang like the thunderclap of a passing storm.

"Well, Monsieur de Mortsauf loves me as much as it is in him to love; all the affection of which his heart is capable is poured out at my feet, as the Magdalen poured out her precious balm at the feet of the Saviour. Believe me when I tell you that a life of love is an exception to every earthly law; every flower fades, every great joy has a bitter morrow—when it has a morrow. Real life is a life of sorrow; this nettle is its fit image; it has sprouted in the shade of the terrace, and

grows green on its stem without any sunshine. Here, as in northern latitudes, there are smiles in the sky, rare, to be sure, but making amends for many griefs. After all, if a woman is exclusively a mother, is she not tied by sacrifices rather than by joys? I can draw down on myself the storms I see ready to break on the servants or on my children, and as I thus conduct them I feel some mysterious and secret strength. The resignation of one day prepares me for the next.

"And God does not leave me hopeless. Though I was at one time in despair over my children's health, I now see that as they grow up they grow stronger. And, after all, our house is improved, our fortune is amended. Who knows whether Monsieur de Mortsauf's old age may not bring me happiness.

"Believe me, the human being who can appear in the presence of the Great Judge, leading any comforted soul that had been ready to curse life, will have transformed his sorrows into delight. If my suffering has secured the happiness of my family, is it really suffering?"

"Yes," replied I. "Still, it was necessary suffering, as mine has been, to make me appreciate the fruit that has ripened here among stones. And now perhaps we may eat of it together, perhaps we may admire its wonders!—the flood of affection it can shed on the soul, the sap which can revive the fading leaves. Then life is no longer a burden; we have cast it from us. Great God! can you not understand?" I went on, in the mystical strain to which religious training had accustomed us both. "See what roads we have trodden to meet at last! What loadstone guided us across the ocean of bitter waters to the fresh springs flowing at the foot of the mountains, over sparkling sands, between green and flowery banks? Have we not, like the Kings of the East, followed the same star? And we stand by the manger where lies an awakening Babe—a divine Child who will shoot his arrows at

the head of the leafless trees, who will wake the world to new life for us by his glad cries, who will lend savor to life by continual delights, and give slumbers by night and contentment by day. Are we not more than brother and sister? What heaven has joined, put not asunder.

"The sorrow of which you speak is the grain scattered freely abroad by the hand of the sower, to bring forth a harvest already golden under the most glorious sun. Behold and see! Shall we not go forth together and gather it ear by ear? What fervor is in me that I dare to speak to you thus. Answer me, or I will never cross the Indre again."

"You have spared me the name of love," said she, interrupting me in a severe tone; "but you have described a feeling of which I know nothing—which to me is prohibited. You are but a boy, and again I forgive you; but it is for the last time. Understand, monsieur, my whole heart is drunk, so to speak, with motherhood. I love Monsieur de Mortsauf, not as a social duty, nor as an investment to earn eternal bliss, but from an irresistible feeling, clinging to him by every fibre of my heart. Was I forced into this marriage? I chose it out of sympathy with misfortune. Was it not the part of woman to heal the bruises of time, to comfort those who had stood in the breach and come back wounded?

"How can I tell you? I felt a sort of selfish pleasure in seeing that you could amuse him. Is not that purely motherly? Has not my long story shown you plainly that I have three children who must never find me wanting, on whom I must shed a healing dew and all the sunshine of my soul without allowing the smallest particle to be adulterated? Do not turn a mother's milk.

"So, though the wife in me is invulnerable, never speak to me thus again. If you fail to respect this simple prohibition, I warn you, the door of this house will be closed against you for ever. I believed in pure friendship, in a voluntary brotherhood more stable than any natural relationship. I was mis-

taken! I looked for a friend who would not judge me, a friend who would listen to me in those hours of weakness when a voice of reproof is murderous, a saintly friend with whom I should have nothing to fear. Youth is magnanimous, incapable of falsehood, self-sacrificing, and disinterested; as I saw your constancy, I believed, I confess, in some help from heaven; I believed I had met a spirit that would be to me alone what the priest is to all, a heart into which I might pour out my sorrows when they are too many, and utter my cries when they insist on being heard and would choke me if I suppressed them. In that way my life, which is so precious to these children, might be prolonged till Jacques is a man. But this, perhaps, is too selfish. Can the tale of Petrarch's Laura be repeated? I deceived myself, this is not the will of God. I must die at my post like a soldier, without a friend. My confessor is stern, austere—and my aunt is dead."

Two large tears, sparking in the moonlight, dropped from her eyes and rolled down her cheeks to her chin; but I held out my hand in time to catch them and drank them with pious avidity, excited by her words, that rang with those ten years of secret weeping, of expanded feeling, of incessant care, of perpetual alarms—the loftiest heroism of your sex. She gazed at me with a look of mild amazement mingled with wonder.

"This," said I, "is the first, holy communion of love. Yes, I have entered into your sorrows, I am one with your soul, as we become one with Christ by drinking His sacred blood. To love even without hope is happiness. What woman on earth could give me any joy so great as that of having imbibed your tears! I accept the bargain which must, no doubt, bring me suffering. I am yours without reserve, and will be just whatever you wish me to be."

She checked me by a gesture, and said—

"I consent to the compact if you will never strain the ties that bind us."

"Yes," said I. "But the less you grant me, the more sure must I be that I really possess it."

"So you begin by distrusting me," she replied, with melancholy doubtfulness.

"No, by one pure delight. For listen, I want a name for you which no one ever calls you by; all my own, like the affection that we give each other."

"It is much to ask," said she. "However, I am less ungenerous than you think me. Monsieur de Mortsauf calls me Blanche. One person only, the one I loved best, my adorable aunt, used to call me Henriette. I will be Henriette again for you."

I took her hand and kissed it, and she yielded it with the full confidence which makes woman our superior—a confidence that masters us. She leaned against the brick parapet and looked out over the river.

"Are you not rash, dear friend," said she, "to rush with one leap to the goal of your course? You have drained at the first draught a cup offered you in all sincerity. But a true feeling knows no half-measures; it is all or nothing. Monsieur de Mortsauf," she went on after a moment's silence, "is above everything loyal and proud. You might perhaps be tempted for my sake to overlook what he said; if he has forgotten it, I will remind him of it to-morrow. Stay away from Clochegourde for a few days; he will respect you all the more. On Sunday next, as we come out of church, he will make the first advances. I know him. He will make up for past offenses, and will like you the better for having treated him as a man responsible for his words and deeds."

"Five days without seeing you, hearing your voice!"

"Never put such fervor into your speech to me," said she.

We twice paced the terrace in silence. Then, in a tone of command, which showed that she had entered into possession of my soul, she said—

"It is late; good-night."

I wished to kiss her hand; she hesitated; then she gave it me, saying in a voice of entreaty—

"Never take it unless I give it you; leave me completely free, or else I shall be at your bidding, and that must not be."

"Good-by," said I.

I went out of the little gate at the bottom of the garden, which she opened for me. Just as she was shutting it she opened it again, and held out her hand, saying—

"You have been indeed kind this evening. You have brought comfort into all my future life. Take it, my friend, take it."

I kissed it again and again, and when I looked up I saw that there were tears in her eyes.

She went up to the terrace and looked after me across the meadow. As I went along the road to Frapesle, I could still see her white dress in the moonlight; then, a few minutes later, a light was shining in her window.

"Oh, my Henriette!" thought I, "the purest love that ever burnt on earth shall be yours."

I got home to Frapesle, looking back at every step. My spirit was full of indescribable, ineffable gladness. A glorious path at last lay open to the self-devotion that swells every youthful heart, and that in me had so long lain inert. I was consecrated, ordained, like a priest who at one step starts on a totally new life. A simple "*Yes, madame,*" had pledged me to preserve in my heart and for myself alone an irresistible passion, and never to trespass beyond friendship to tempt this woman little by little to love. Every noble feeling awoke within me with a tumult of voices.

Before finding myself cabined in a bedroom, I felt that I must pause in rapture under the blue vault spangled with stars, to hear again in my mind's ear those tones as of a wounded dove, the simple accents of her ingenuous confidence, and inhale with the air the emanations of her soul which she must be sending out to me. How noble she appeared to me—the

woman who so utterly forgot herself in her religious care for weak or suffering or wounded creatures, her devotedness apart from legal chains. She stood serene at the stake of saintly martyrdom! I was gazing at her face as it appeared to me in the darkness, when suddenly I fancied that I discerned in her words a mystical significance which made her seem quite sublime. Perhaps she meant that I was to be to her what she was to her little world; perhaps she intended to derive strength and consolation from me by thus raising me to her sphere, to her level—or higher? The stars, so some bold theorists tell us, thus interchange motion and light. This thought at once lifted me to ethereal realms. I was once more in the heaven of my early dreams, and I accounted for the anguish of my childhood by the infinite beatitude in which I now floated.

Ye souls of genius extinguished by tears, misprized hearts, Clarissa Harlowes, saintly and unsung, outcast children, guiltless exiles—all ye who entered life through its desert places, who have everywhere found cold faces, closed hearts, deaf ears—do not bewail yourselves! You alone can know the immensity of joy in the moment when a heart opens to you, an ear listens, a look answers you. One day wipes out all the evil days. Past sorrows, broodings, despair, and melancholy—past, but not forgotten—are so many bonds by which the soul clings to its sister soul. The woman, beautified by our suppressed desires, inherits our wasted sighs and loves; she refunds our deluded affections with interest; she supplies a reason for antecedent griefs, for they are the equivalent insisted on by fate for the eternal joy she bestows on the day when souls are wed. The angels only know the new name by which this sacred love may be called; just as you, sweet martyrs, alone can know what Madame de Mortsauf had suddenly become to me—hapless and alone.

This scene had taken place one Tuesday; I waited till

the following Sunday before recrossing the Indre in my walks.

During these five days great events occurred at Clochegourde. The Count was promoted to the grade of major-general, and the Cross of Saint-Louis was conferred on him with a pension of four thousand francs. The Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry was made a peer of France, two of his forest domains were restored to him, he had an appointment at court, and his wife was reinstated in her property, which had not been sold, having formed part of the imperial crown lands. Thus the Comtesse de Mortsauf had become one of the richest heiresses in the province. Her mother had come to Clochegourde to pay her a hundred thousand francs she had saved out of the revenues from Givry; this money, settled on her at her marriage, she had never received; but the Count, in spite of his necessity, had never alluded to this. In all that concerned the outer circumstances of life, this man's conduct was marked by disinterested pride.

By adding this sum to what he had saved, the Count could now purchase two adjoining estates, that would bring in about nine thousand francs a year. His son was to inherit his maternal grandfather's peerage; and it occurred to the Count to entail on Jacques the landed property of both families without prejudice to Madeleine, who, with the Duc de Lenoncourt's interest, would, no doubt, marry well.

All these schemes and this good fortune shed some balm on the exile's wounds.

The Duchesse de Lenoncourt at Clochegourde was an event in the district. I sorrowfully reflected what a great lady she was, and I then discerned in her daughter that spirit of caste which her noble soul had hitherto hidden from my eyes. What was I—poor, and with no hope for the future but in my courage and my brains? I never thought of the consequences of the restoration either to myself or to others.

On Sunday, from the side chapel, where I attended mass

with Monsieur and Madame de Chessel and the Abbé Quélus, I sent hungry looks to the chapel on the opposite side, where the Duchess and her daughter were, the Count, and the children. The straw bonnet that hid my idol's face never moved, and this ignoring of my presence seemed to be a stronger tie than all that had passed. The noble Henriette de Lenoncourt, who was now my beloved Henriette, was absorbed in prayer; faith gave an indescribable sentiment of prostrate dependence to her attitude, the feeling of a sacred statue, which penetrated my soul.

As is customary in village churches, vespers were chanted some little time after high mass. As we left the church, Madame de Chessel very naturally suggested to her neighbors that they should spend the two hours' interval at Frapesle instead of crossing the Indre and the valley twice in the heat. The invitation was accepted. Monsieur de Chessel gave the Duchess his arm, Madame de Chessel took the Count's, and I offered mine to the Countess. For the first time I felt that light wrist resting by my side. As we made our way back from the church to Frapesle through the woods of Saché, where the dappled lights, falling through the leaves, made pretty patterns like China silk, I went through surges of pride and thrills of feeling that gave me violent palpitations.

"What ails you?" said she, after we had gone a few steps in silence, which I dared not break; "your heart beats too fast."

"I have heard of good fortune for you," said I, "and, like all who love much, I feel some vague fears. Will not your greatness mar your friendship?"

"Mine?" cried she. "For shame! If you ever have such an idea I shall not despise you, but simply forget you for ever."

I looked at her in a state of intoxication, which must surely have been infectious.

"We get the benefit of an edict which we neither prompted

nor asked for, and we shall neither be beggars nor grasping," she went on. "Beside, as you know, neither I nor Monsieur de Mortsauf can ever leave Clochegourde. By my advice he has declined the active command he had a right to at the Maison Rouge. It is enough that my father should have an appointment. And our compulsory modesty," she went on, with a bitter smile, "has been to our boy's advantage already. The King, on whom my father is in attendance, has very graciously promised to reserve for Jacques the favors we have declined.

"Jacques' education, which must now be thought of, is the subject of very grave discussion. He will be the representative of the two houses of Mortsauf and Lenoncourt. I have no ambition but for him, so this is an added anxiety. Not only must Jacques be kept alive, but he must also be made worthy of his name, and the two necessities are antagonistic. Hitherto I have been able to teach him, graduating his tasks to his strength; but where am I to find a tutor who would suit me in this respect? And then, by-and-by, to what friend can I look to preserve him in that dreadful Paris, where everything is a snare to the soul and a peril to the body?

"My friend," she went on, in an agitated voice, "who that looks at your brow and eye can fail to see in you one of the birds that dwell on the heights. Take your flight, soar up, and one day become the guardian of our beloved child. Go to Paris; and if your brother and your father will not help you, our family, especially my mother, who has a genius for business, will have great influence. Take the benefit of it, and then you will never lack support or encouragement in any career you may choose. Throw your superabundant energy into ambition——"

"I understand," said I, interrupting her. "My ambition is to be my mistress! I do not need that to make me wholly yours. No; I do not choose to be rewarded for my good behavior here by favors there. I will go; I will grow up

alone, unaided. I will accept what you can give me; from any one else I will take nothing."

"That is childish," she murmured, but she could not disguise a smile of satisfaction.

"Beside," I went on, "I have pledged myself. In considering our position, I have resolved to bind myself to you by ties which can never be loosened."

She shivered, and stood still to look in my face.

"What do you mean?" she asked, letting the other couples who were in front of us go forward, and keeping the children by her side.

"Well," replied I, "tell me plainly how you would wish me to love you."

"Love me as my aunt loved me; I have given you her rights by permitting you to call me by the name she had chosen from my names."

"Love you without hope, with entire devotion? Yes, I will do for you what men do for God. Have you not asked it of me? I will go into a seminary; I will come out a priest, and I will educate Jacques. Your Jacques shall be my second self: my political notions, my thoughts, my energy, and patience—I will give them all to him. Thus I may remain near you, and no suspicion can fall on my love, set in religion like a silver image in a crystal. You need not fear any of those perfervid outbreaks which come over a man, which once already proved too much for me. I will be burned in the fire, and love you with purified ardor."

She turned pale, and answered eagerly, without any hesitancy—

"Félix, do not fetter yourself with cords, which some day may be an obstacle in the way of our happiness. I should die of grief if I were the cause of such suicide. Child, is the despair of love a religious vocation? Wait to test life before you judge of life. I desire it—I insist. Marry neither the church nor a woman; do not marry at all; I forbid it. Re-

main free. You are now one-and-twenty; you scarcely know what the future may have in store.

"Good heavens!" she added, "am I mistaken in you? But I believed that in two months one might really know some natures."

"What, then, is it that you hope for?" I asked with lightning in my eyes.

"My friend, accept my assistance, educate yourself, make a fortune, and you shall know. Well, then," she added, as if she were betraying her secret, "always hold fast to Madeleine's hand, which is at this moment in yours."

She had bent toward me to whisper these words, which showed how seriously she had thought of my future prospects.

"Madeleine?" cried I. "Never!"

These two words left us silent again and greatly agitated. Our minds were tossed by such upheavals as leave indelible traces.

Just before us was a wooden gate into the park of Frapesle —I think I can see it now, with its tumble-down side-posts overgrown with climbing plants, moss, weeds, and brambles. Suddenly an idea—that of the Count's death—flashed like an arrow through my brain, and I said—

"I understand."

"That is fortunate," she replied, in a tone which made me see that I had suspected her of a thought that could never have occurred to her.

Her pure-mindedness wrung from me a tear of admiration, made bitter indeed by the selfishness of my passion. Then, with a revulsion of feeling, I thought that she did not love me enough to wish for freedom. So long as love shrinks from crime, it seems to have a limit, and love ought to be infinite. I felt a terrible spasm at my heart.

"She does not love me," thought I.

That she might not read my soul, I bent down and kissed Madeleine's hair.

"I am afraid of your mother," I said to the Countess, to reopen the conversation.

"So am I," she replied, with a childish gesture. "Do not forget to address her as Madame la Duchesse, and speak to her in the third person. Young people of the present day have forgotten those polite formalities; revive them; do that much for me. Beside, it is always in good taste to be respectful to a woman, whatever her age may be, and to accept social distinctions without hesitancy. Is not the homage you pay to recognized superiority a guarantee for what is due to yourself? In society everything holds together. The Cardinal de Rovere and Raphael d'Urbino were in their time two equally respected powers.

"You have drunk the milk of the revolution in your schools, and your political ideas may show the taint; but as you get on in life, you will discover that ill-defined notions of liberty are inadequate to create the happiness of nations. I, before considering, as a Lenoncourt, what an aristocracy is or ought to be, listen to my peasant commonsense, which shows me that society exists only by the hierarchy. You are at a stage in your life when you must make a wise choice. Stick to your party, especially," she added, with a laugh, "when it is on the winning side."

I was deeply touched by these words, in which wise policy lurked below the warmth of her affection, a union which gives women such powers of fascination. They all know how to lend the aspect of sentiment to the shrewdest reasoning.

Henriette, in her anxiety to justify the Count's actions, had, as it seemed, anticipated the reflections which must arise in my mind when, for the first time, I saw the results of being a courtier. Monsieur de Mortsauf, a king in his domain, surrounded with his historic halo, had assumed magnificent proportions in my eyes, and I own that I was greatly astonished at the distance he himself set between the Duchess and himself by his subservient manner. A slave even has his

pride; he will only obey the supreme despot; I felt myself humbled at seeing the abject attitude of the man who made me tremble by overshadowing my love. This impulse of feeling revealed to me all the torment of a woman whose generous soul is joined to that of a man whose meanness she has to cover decently every day. Respect is a barrier which protects great and small alike; each on his own part can look the other steadily in the face.

I was deferent to the Duchess by reason of my youth; but where others saw only the Duchess, I saw my Henriette's mother, and there was a solemnity in my respect.

We went into the front court of Frapesle, and there found all the party. The Comte de Mortsauf introduced me to the lady with much graciousness, and she examined me with a cold, reserved manner. Madame de Lenoncourt was then a woman of fifty-six, extremely well-preserved, and with lordly manners. Seeing her hard, blue eyes, her wrinkled temples, her thin, ascetic face, her stately upright figure, her constant quiescence, her dull pallor—in her daughter brilliant whiteness—I recognized her as of the same race as my own mother, as surely as a mineralogist recognizes Swedish iron. Her speech was that of the old court circles; she pronounced *oit* as *ait*, spoke of *frait* for *froid*, and of *porteux* for *porteurs*. I was neither servile nor prim, and I behaved so nicely that, as we went to vespers, the Countess said in my ear, "You are perfect."

The Count came up to me, took my hand, and said, "We have not quarreled, Félix? If I was a little hasty, you will forgive your old comrade. We shall probably stay to dine here, and we hope to see you at Clochegourde on Thursday, the day before the Duchess leaves us. I am going to Tours on business. Do not neglect Clochegourde, my mother-in-law is an acquaintance I advise you to cultivate; her drawing-room will pitch the keynote for the Faubourg Saint-Germain. She has the tradition of the finest society, she is immensely

well informed, and knows the armorial bearings of every gentleman in Europe from the highest to the lowest."

The Count's good taste, aided perhaps by the counsels of his good genius, told well in the new circumstances in which he was placed by the triumph of his party. He was neither arrogant nor offensively polite; he showed no affectation, and the Duchess no patronizing airs. Monsieur and Madame de Chessel gratefully accepted the invitation to dinner on the following Thursday.

The Duchess rather liked me, and her way of looking at me made me understand that she was studying me as a man of whom her daughter had spoken. On our return from church she inquired about my family, and asked whether the Vandenesse, who was already embarked in diplomacy, were a relation of mine.

"He is my brother," said I.

Then she became almost affectionate. She informed me that my grand-aunt, the old Marquise de Listomère, had been a Grandlieu. Her manner was polite, as Monsieur de Mortsauf's had been on the day when he saw me for the first time. Her eyes lost that haughty expression by which the princes of the earth make you feel the distance that divides you from them.

I knew hardly anything of my family; the Duchess told me that my great-uncle, an old abbé whom I did not know even by name, was a member of the privy council; that my brother had received promotion; and, finally, that, by a clause in the charter, of which I had heard nothing, my father was restored to his title of Marquis.

"I am but a chattel, a serf to Clochegourde," said I to the Countess in an undertone.

The fairy wand of the restoration had worked with a rapidity quite astounding to children brought up under Imperial rule. To me these changes meant nothing. Madame de Mortsauf's lightest word or merest gesture were the only

events to which I attached any importance. I knew nothing of politics, nor of the ways of the world. I had no ambition but to love Henriette better than Petrarch loved Laura. This indifference made the Duchess look upon me as a boy.

A great deal of company came to Frapesle, and we were thirty at dinner. How enchanting for a young man to see the woman he loves the most beautiful person present and the object of passionate admiration, while he knows the light of those chastely modest eyes is for him alone, and is familiar enough with every tone of her voice to find in her speech, superficially trivial or ironical, proofs of an ever-present thought of him, even while his heart is full of burning jealousy of the amusements of her world!

The Count, delighted with the attentions paid him, was almost young again; his wife hoped it might work some change in him; I was gay with Madeleine, who, like all children in whom the body is too frail for the wrestling soul, made me laugh by her amazing remarks, full of sarcastic but never malignant wit, which spared no one. It was a lovely day. One word, one hope, born that morning had brightened all nature, and, seeing me so glad, Henriette was glad too.

"This happiness falling across my gray and cloudy life has done me good," she told me next day.

Of course I spent the morrow at Clochegourde; I had been exiled for five days, and thirsted for life. The Count had set out for Tours at five in the morning.

A serious matter of dispute had come up between the mother and daughter. The Duchess insisted that the Countess should come to Paris, where she would find her a place at court, and where the Count, by retracting his refusal, might fill a high position. Henriette, who was regarded as a happy wife, would not unveil her griefs to anybody, not even to her mother, nor betray her husband's incapacity. It was to prevent her mother from penetrating the secret of her home life

that she had sent Monsieur de Mortsauf to Tours, where he was to fight out some questions with the lawyers. I alone, as she had said, knew the secrets of Clochegourde.

Having learned by experience how effective the pure air and blue sky of this valley were in soothing the irritable moods and acute sufferings of sickness, and how favorable the life at Clochegourde was to her children's health, she gave these reasons for her refusal, though strongly opposed by the Duchess—a domineering woman who felt humiliated rather than grieved by her daughter's far from brilliant marriage. Henriette could see that her mother cared little enough about Jacques and Madeleine, a terrible discovery!

Like all mothers who have been accustomed to treat a married daughter with the same despotism as they exerted over her as a girl, the Duchess adopted measures which allowed of no reply; now she affected insinuating kindness to extract consent to her views, and now assumed a bitter iciness to gain by fear what she could not achieve by sweetness; then, seeing all her efforts wasted, she showed the same acrid irony as I had known in my own mother. In the course of ten days Henriette went through all the heart-rendings a young wife must go through to establish her independence. You, who for your happiness have the best of mothers, can never understand these things. To form any idea of this struggle between a dry, cold, calculating, ambitious woman and her daughter overflowing with the fresh, genial sweetness that never runs dry, you must imagine the lily, with which I have compared the Countess, crushed in the wheels of a machine of polished steel. This mother had never had anything in common with her daughter; she could not suspect any of the real difficulties which compelled her to forego every advantage from the restoration, and to live her *solitary* life. This word, which she used to convey her suspicions, opened a gulf between the women which nothing could ever after bridge over.

Though families duly bury their terrible quarrels, look into their life; you will find in almost every house some wide incurable wounds blighting natural feeling; or some genuine and pathetic passion which affinity of character makes eternal, and which gives an added shock to the hand of death, leaving a dark and ineradicable bruise; or, again, simmering hatred, slowly petrifying the heart, and freezing up all tears at the moment of eternal parting.

Tortured yesterday, tortured to-day, stricken by every one, even by the two suffering little ones, who were guiltless alike of the ills they endured and of those they caused, how could this sad soul help loving the one person who never gave a blow, but who would fain have hedged her round with a triple barrier of thorns, so as to shelter her from storms, from every touch, from every pain?

Though these squabbles distressed me, I was sometimes glad as I felt that she took refuge in my heart, for Henriette confided to me her new griefs. I could appreciate her fortitude in suffering, and the energy of patience she could maintain. Every day I understood more perfectly the meaning of her words, "Love me as my aunt loved me."

"Have you really no ambition?" said the Duchess to me at dinner, in a severe tone.

"Madame," replied I, with a very serious mien, "I feel myself strong enough to conquer the world; but I am only one-and-twenty, and I stand alone."

She looked at her daughter with surprise; she had believed that, in order to keep me at her side, the Countess had snuffed out all my ambition.

The time while the Duchess de Lenoncourt stayed at Clochegourde was one of general discomfort. The Countess besought me to be strictly formal; she was frightened at a word spoken low; to please her I was obliged to saddle myself with dissimulation.

The great Thursday came; it was a festival of tiresome

formality, one of those days which lovers hate, when they are used to the facilities of every-day life, accustomed to find their place ready for them, and the mistress of the house wholly theirs. Love has a horror of everything but itself.

The Duchess returned to enjoy the pomps of the court, and all fell into order at Clochegourde.

My little skirmish with the Count had resulted in my being more firmly rooted in the house than before; I could come in at any time without giving rise to the slightest remark, and my previous life led me to spread myself like a climbing plant in the beautiful soul which opened to me the enchanted world of sympathetic feeling. From hour to hour, from minute to minute, our brotherly union, based on perfect confidence, became more intimate; we were confirmed in our relative positions: the Countess wrapped me in her cherishing affection in the white purity of motherly love; while my passion, seraphic in her presence, when I was absent from her grew fierce and thirsty like red-hot iron. Thus I loved her with a twofold love which by turns pierced me with the myriad darts of desire, and then lost them in the sky, where they vanished in the unfathomable ether.

If you ask me why, young as I was and full of vehement craving, I was satisfied to rest in the illusory hopes of a platonic affection, I must confess that I was not yet man enough to torment this woman, who lived in perpetual dread of some disaster to her children, constantly expecting some outbreak, some stormy change of mood in her husband; crushed by him when she was not distressed by some ailment in Jacques or Madeleine, and sitting by the bed of one or the other whenever her husband gave her a little peace. The sound of a too impassioned word shook her being, a desire startled her; for her I had to be love enshrined, strength in tenderness; everything, in short, that she was for others.

And, then, I may say to you, who are so truly woman, the

situation had its enchanting quietism, moments of heavenly sweetness, and of the satisfaction that follows on tacit renunciation. Her conscientiousness was infectious, her self-immolation for no earthly reward was impressive by its tenacity; the living but secret piety which held her other virtues together affected all about her like spiritual incense. Beside, I was young; young enough to concentrate my whole nature in the kiss she so rarely allowed me to press on her hand, giving me only the back of it, never the palm—that being to her, perhaps, the border-line of sensuality. Though two souls never fused and loved with greater ardor, never was the flesh more bravely or victoriously held in subjection.

Later in life I understood the causes of my complete happiness. At that age no self-interest distracted my heart, no ambition crossed the current of a feeling which, like an unstemmed torrent, fed its flow with everything it carried before it. Yes, as we grow older, the woman is what we love in a woman; whereas we love everything in the first woman we love—her children are our children, her house, her interests, are our own; her grief is our greatest grief; we love her dress and her belongings; it vexes us more to see her corn spilt than it would to lose our own money; we feel ready to quarrel with a stranger who should meddle with the trifles on the mantel. This sanctified love makes us live in another, while afterward, alas! we absorb that other life into our own, and require the woman to enrich our impoverished spirit with her youthful feeling.

I was ere long one of the family, and found here for the first time the infinite soothing which is to an aching heart what a bath is to the tired limbs; the soul is refreshed on every side, anointed in its inmost folds. You cannot understand this; you are a woman, and this is the happiness you give without ever receiving in kind. Only a man can know the delicate enjoyment of being the privileged friend of the mistress of another home, the secret pivot of her affections.

The dogs cease to bark at you; the servants, like the dogs, recognize the hidden passport you bear; the children, who have no insincerities, who know that their share will never be smaller, but that you bring joy to the light of their life—the children have a spirit of divination. To you they become kittenish, with the delightful tyranny that they keep for those they adore and who adore them; they are shrewdly knowing, and your guileless accomplices; they steal up on tiptoe, smile in your face, and silently leave you. Everything welcomes you, loves you, and smiles upon you. A true passion is like a beautiful flower, which it is all the more delightful to find when the soil that produces it is barren and wild.

But if I had the delights of being thus naturalized in a family where I made relationships after my own heart, I also paid the penalties. Hitherto Monsieur de Mortsauf had controlled himself in my presence; I had only seen the general outline of his faults, but I now discerned their application in its fullest extent, and I saw how nobly charitable the Countess had been in her description of her daily warfare. I felt all the angles of his intolerable temper; I heard his ceaseless outcries about mere trifles, his complaints of ailments of which no sign was visible, his innate discontent, which blighted her life, and the incessant craving to rule, which would have made him devour fresh victims every year. When we walked out in the evening, he chose the way we went; but, wherever it might be, he was always bored by it; when he got home he blamed others for his fatigue—it was his wife who had done it, by taking him against his will the way she wanted to go; he forgot that he had led us, and complained of being ruled by her in every trifle, of never being allowed to decide or think for himself, of being a mere cypher in the house. If his hard words fell on silent patience he got angry, feeling the limit to his power; he would inquire sharply whether religion did not require wives to submit to their husbands, and whether it was decent to make a father contemptible before his children.

He always ended by touching some sensitive chord in his wife; and when he had struck it, he seemed to find particular pleasure in this domineering pettiness.

Sometimes he affected gloomy taciturnity and morbid dejection, which frightened his wife and led her to lavish on him the most touching care. Like spoiled children, who exert their power without a thought of their mother's alarms, he allowed himself to be petted like Jacques or Madeleine, of whom he was very jealous. At last, indeed, I discovered that in the smallest, as in the most important matters, the Count behaved to his servants, his children, and his wife as he had to me over the backgammon.

On the day when I first understood, root and branch, those miseries which, like forest creepers, stifled and crushed the movement and the very breathing of this family, which cast a tangle of fine but infinitely numerous threads about the working of the household, hindering every advance of fortune by hampering the most necessary steps, I was seized with admiring awe, which subjugated my love and crushed it down into my heart. What was I, good God! The tears I had swallowed filled me with a sort of rapturous intoxication; it was a joy to me to identify myself with this wife's endurance. Till then I had submitted to the Count's tyranny as a smuggler pays his fines; thenceforth I voluntarily received the despot's blows to be as close as possible to Henriette. The Countess understood, and allowed me to take my place at her side, rewarding me by granting me to share her penance, as of old the repentant apostate, eager to fly heavenward with his brethren, won permission to die in the arena.

"But for you this life would be too much for me," she said one night when the Count had been more annoying, more acrid, and more whimsical than usual, as flies are in great heat.

He had gone to bed. Henriette and I sat during part of the evening under the acacias basking in the beams of sunset

the children playing near us. Our words, mere infrequent exclamations, expressed the sympathetic feelings in which we had taken refuge from our common sufferings. When words failed us, silence served us faithfully; our souls entered into each other, so to speak, without hindrance, but without the invitation of a kiss; each enjoying the charm of pensive torpor, they floated together on the ripples of the same dream, dipped together in the river, and came forth like two nymphs as closely one as even jealousy could wish, but free from every earthly tie. We plunged into a bottomless abyss, and came back to the surface, our hands empty, but asking each other by a look, "Out of so many days, shall we ever have one single day for our own?"

When rapture culls for us these blossoms without root, why is it that the flesh rebels? In spite of the enervating poetry of the evening which tinged the brickwork of the parapet with sober and soothing tones of orange; in spite of the religious atmosphere, which softened the shouts of the children, leaving us at peace, longing ran in sparks of fire through my veins like the signal for a blaze of rockets. At the end of three months I was beginning to be dissatisfied with the lot appointed to me; and I was softly fondling Henriette's hand, trying thus to expend a little of the fever that was scorching me.

Henriette was at once Madame de Mortsauf again; a few tears rose to my eyes, she saw them, and gave me a melting look, laying her hand on my lips.

"Understand," said she, "that this costs me tears too. The friendship that asks so great a favor is dangerous."

I broke out in a passion of reproach, I spoke of all I suffered, and of the small alleviation I craved to help me to endure it. I dared tell her that at my age, though the senses were spiritualized, the spirit had a sex; that I could die—but not without having spoken.

She reduced me to silence with a flashing look of pride, in

which I seemed to read the cacique's reply, "Am I then on a bed of roses?" Perhaps, too, I was mistaken. Ever since the day when, at the gate of Frapesle, I had wrongly ascribed to her the idea which would build our happiness on a tomb, I had been ashamed to stain her soul by uttering a wish tainted with mere criminal passion.

Then she spoke, and in honeyed words told me that she could never be wholly mine, that I ought to know that. I understood, as she spoke the words, that if I submitted, I should have dug a gulf between us. I bent my head. She went on, saying that she had an inmost conviction that she might love a brother without offense to God or man; that there is some comfort in thus taking such an affection as a living image of Divine love, which, according to the good Saint-Martin, is the life of the world. If I could not be to her some such person as her old director, less than a lover but more than a brother, we must meet no more. She could but die, offering up to God this added anguish, though she could not endure it without tears and torment.

"I have given you more than I ought," she said in conclusion, "since there is nothing more that you can take, and I am already punished."

I could but soothe her, promise never, never to cause her a moment's pain, and vow to love her at twenty as old men love their youngest born.

Next morning I came early to the house. She had no flowers to put in the vases in her gray drawing-room. I tramped across the fields and through the vineyards, hunting for flowers to make her two nosegays; and as I gathered them one by one, cutting them with long stems and admiring them, it struck that there was a harmony in their hues and foliage, a poetry that found its way to the understanding by fascinating the eye, just as musical phrases arouse a thousand associations in loved and loving hearts. If color is organic light, must it not have its meaning, as vibrations of the air have? Helped

by Jacques and Madeleine, all three of us happy in contriving a surprise for our dear one, I sat down on the lower steps of the terrace flight, where we spread out our flowers and set to work to compose two nosegays, by which I intended to symbolize a sentiment.

Picture to yourself a fountain of flowers, gushing up, as it were, from the vase and falling in fringed waves, and from the heart of it my aspirations rose as silver-cupped lilies and white roses. Among this cool mass twinkled blue cornflowers, forget-me-not, bugloss—every blue flower whose hues, borrowed from the sky, blend so well with white; for are they not two types of innocence—that which knows nothing and that which knows all—the mind of a child and the mind of a martyr? Love has its blazonry, and the Countess read my meaning. She gave me one of those piercing looks that are like the cry of a wounded man touched on the tender spot; she was at once shy and delighted. What a reward I found in that look! What encouragement in the thought that I could please her and refresh her heart!

So I invented Father Castel's theory as applied to love and rediscovered for her a lore lost to Europe, where flowers of language take the place of the messages conveyed in the East by color and fragrance. And it was charming to express my meaning through these daughters of the sun, the sisters of the blossoms that open under the radiance of love. I soon had an understanding with the products of the rural flora, just as a man I met at a later time had with bees.

Twice a week, during the remainder of my stay at Frapesle, I carried out the long business of this poetical structure, for which I needed every variety of grass, and I studied them all with care, less as a botanist than as an artist, and with regard to their sentiment rather than their form. To find a flower where it grew I often walked immense distances along the river-bank, through the dells, to the top of cliffs, across the sandhills and commons, gathering ideas from among clumps

of heath. In these walks I discovered for myself pleasures unknown to the student who lives in meditation, to the husbandman engaged on some special culture, to the artisan tied to the town, to the merchant nailed to his counting-house, but known to some foresters, to some woodsmen, to some dreamers.

Nature has certain effects of boundless meaning, rising to the level of the greatest intellectual ideas. Thus, a blossoming heath covered with diamonds of dew that hang on every leaf sparkling in the sun, a thing of infinite beauty for one single eye that may happen to see it. Or a forest nook, shut in by tumbled boulders, broken by willows, carpeted with moss, dotted with juniper shrubs—it scares you by its wild, hurtled, fearful aspect, and the cry of the hawk comes up to you. Or a scorching sandy common with no vegetation; a stony, precipitous plateau, the horizon reminding you of the desert—but there I found an exquisite and lonely flower, a pulsatilla waving its violet silk pennon in honor of its golden stamens; a pathetic image of my fair idol, alone in her valley! Or, again, broad pools over which nature flings patches of greenery, a sort of transition between animal and vegetable being, and in a few days life is there—floating plants and insects, like a world in the upper air. Or, again, a cottage with its cabbage garden, its vineyard, its fences, overhanging a bog, and surrounded by a few meagre fields of rye—emblematic of many a humble life. Or a long forest avenue, like the nave of a cathedral where the pillars are trees, their branches meeting like the groins of a vault, and at the end a distant glade seen through the foliage, dappled with light and shade, or glowing in the ruddy beams of sunset like the painted glass window of a chancel, filled with birds for choristers. Then, as you come out of the grove, a chalky fallow where full-fed snakes wriggle over the hot, crackling moss and vanish into their holes after raising their graceful, proud heads. And over these pictures cast floods of sunshine, rip-

pling like a nourishing tide, or piles of gray cloud in bars like the furrows on an old man's brow, or the cool tones of a faintly yellow sky banded with pale light—and listen! You will hear vague harmonies in the depth of bewildering silence.

During the months of September and October I never collected a nosegay which took me less than three hours of seeking, I was so lost in admiration—with the mild indolence of a poet—of these transient allegories which represented to me the strongest contrasts of human life, majestic scenes in which my memory now digs for treasure. To this day I often wed to such grand spectacles my remembrance of the soul that then pervaded nature. I still see in them my queen, whose white dress floated through the copse and danced over the lawns, and whose spirit came up to me like a promise of fruition from every flower-cup full of amorous stamens.

No declaration, no proof of unbounded passion was ever more contagious than were these symphonies of flowers, wherein my cheated desires gave me such inspiration as Beethoven could express in notes; with vehement reaction on himself, transcendent heavenward flights. When she saw them Henriette was no longer Madame de Mortsauf. She came back to them again and again; she fed on them; she found in them all the thoughts I had woven into them, when, to accept the offering, she looked up from her work-frame and said, "Dear! how lovely that is!"

You can imagine this enchanting communication through the arrangement of a nosegay, as you would understand Saadi from a fragment of his poetry. Have you ever smelt in the meadows, in the month of May, the fragrance which fills all creatures with the heady joy of procreation; which, if you are in a boat, makes you dip your hands in the water; which makes you loosen your hair to the breeze, and renews your thoughts like the fresh greenery on the trees of the forest? A small grass, the vernal anthoxanthum, is one of the chief elements in this mysterious combination. No one can wear

it with impunity. If you put a few sprays of it in a nosegay, with its shining variegated blades like a finely striped green-and-white dress, unaccountable pulses will stir within you, opening the rosebuds in your heart that modesty keeps closed. Imagine, then, round the wide edge of the china jar a border composed entirely of the white tufts peculiar to a sedum that grows in the vineyards of Touraine, a faint image of the wished-for forms, bowed like a submissive slave-girl. From this base rise the tendrils of bindweed with its white funnels, bunches of pink rest-harrow mingled with young shoots of oak gorgeously tinted and lustrous; these all stand forward, humbly drooping like weeping willow, timid and suppliant like prayers. Above, you see the slender blossoming sprays, for ever tremulous, of quaking grass and its stream of yellowish anthers; the snowy tufts of feathergrass from brook and meadow, the green hair of the barren brome, the frail agrostis —pale, purple hopes that crown our earliest dreams, and that stand out against the gray-green background in the light that plays on all these flowering grasses. Above these, again, there are a few China roses, mingling with the light tracery of carrot leaves with plumes of cottongrass, marabout tufts of meadow-sweet, umbels of wild parsley, the pale hair of travelers' joy, now in seed; the tiny crosslets of milky-white candytuft and milfoil, the loose sprays of rose-and-black fumitory, tendrils of the vine, twisted branches of the honeysuckle—in short, every form these artless creatures can show that is wildest and most ragged—flamboyant and trident; spear-shaped, dentate leaves, and stems as knotted as desire writhing in the depths of the soul. And from the heart of this overflowing torrent of love, a grand red double poppy stands up with bursting buds, flaunting its burning flame above starry jessamine and above the ceaseless shower of pollen, a cloud dancing in the air and reflecting the sunshine in its glittering motes. Would not any woman, who is alive to the seductive perfume that lurks in the anthoxanthum,

understand this mass of abject ideas, this tender whiteness broken by uncontrollable impulses, and this red fire of love imploring joys denied it in the hundred struggles of an undying, unwearied, and eternal passion? Set this appeal in the sunshine of a window so as to do justice to all its subtle details, its delicate contrasts and arabesque elegance, that its mistress may see perhaps an open blossom moist with a tear—she will be very near yielding; an angel, or the voice of her children, alone will check her on the edge of the abyss.

What do we offer up to God? Incense, light and song, the purest expression at our command. Well, then, was not all that we offer to God dedicated to love in this poem of glowing flowers, ever murmuring sadly to the heart while encouraging hidden raptures, unconfessed hopes, and illusions which flash and are gone like shooting stars on a hot night?

These neutral pleasures were a comfort to us, helping us to cheat nature, exasperated by long study of the beloved face and by glances which find enjoyment in piercing to the very core of the form they gaze on. To me—I dare not say to her—these utterances were like the rifts through which the water spurts in a solid dyke, and which often prevent a catastrophe by affording a necessary outlet. Abstinence brings overwhelming exhaustion that finds succor in the few crumbs dropping from the sky, which, from Dan to the Sahara, sheds manna on the pilgrim. And I have found Henriette before one of those nosegays, her hands hanging loosely, a prey to those stormy contemplations when the feelings swell the bosom, give light to the brow, surge up in waves that toss and foam and leave us enervated by exhaustion.

I have never since gathered nosegays for any one!

When we had invented this language for our own use, we felt the sort of satisfaction that a slave finds in deceiving his master.

All the rest of the month, when I hurried up the garden, I

often saw her face at the window, and when I went into the drawing-room she was sitting at her frame. If I did not arrive punctually at the time we had agreed upon, without ever fixing an hour, I sometimes saw her white figure on the terrace, and when I found her there she would say—

"I came to meet you to-day. Must we not pet the youngest child?"

The dreadful games of backgammon with the Count had come to an end. His recent purchases required him to be constantly busy, inspecting, verifying, measuring, and planning; he had orders to give, field-work that required the master's eye, and matters to be settled between him and his wife. The Countess and I frequently walked out to join him on his new land, taking the two children, who all the way would run after butterflies, stag-beetles, and crickets; and gather nosegays too—or, to be exact, sheaves of flowers.

To walk with the woman he loves, to have her hand on his arm, to pick her road for her! These infinite joys are enough for a man's lifetime. Their talk is then so confiding! We went alone, we came back with the general—a little mocking name we gave the Count when he was in a good humor. This difference in our order of march tinged our happiness by a contrast of which the secret is known only to hearts which meet under difficulties. On our way home, this felicity—a look, a pressure of the hand—was checkered by uneasiness. Our speech, freely uttered as we went, had mysterious meanings as we came back, when one of us, after a pause, found a reply to some insidious inquiry, or a discussion we had begun was carried on in the enigmatic phraseology to which our language lends itself, and which women invent so cleverly. Who has not known the pleasure of such an understanding, in an unknown sphere, as it were, where spirits move apart from the crowd and meet superior to all ordinary laws? Once a mad hope rose in me, to be immediately crushed when, in reply to the Count who asked what we were

talking about, Henriette said something with a double meaning, which he took quite simply. This innocent jest amused Madeleine, but it brought a blush to her mother's cheek; and, by a stern look, she told me that she was capable of withdrawing her soul as she had once withdrawn her hand, intending to be always a blameless wife. But a purely spiritual union has such charms that we did the same again on the morrow.

Thus the hours, days, and weeks flew on, full of ever-new felicity. We had come to the season of the vintage, in Touraine always a high festival. By the end of September the sun is less fierce than during harvest, making it safe to linger in the open air without fear of sunstroke or fatigue. It is easier, too, to gather grapes than to reap corn. The fruit is fully ripe. The crops are carried, bread is cheaper, and increased abundance makes life brighter. Then the fears that always hang over the result of the year's toil, in which so much money and so much sweat are expended, are relieved by filled granaries and cellars waiting to be filled. The vintage comes as a jovial dessert to the harvest feast, and the sky always smiles on it in Touraine, where the autumn is a beautiful season.

In that hospitable province the vintagers are fed by the owner; and as these meals are the only occasions throughout the year when these poor laborers have substantial and well-cooked food, they look forward to them as, in patriarchal households, the children count on anniversary festivals. They crowd to the estates where the masters are known to be open-handed. So every house is full of people and provisions. The winepresses are always at work. The world seems alive with the merry gang of coopers at work, the carts crowded with laughing girls and men, who, getting better wages than at any other time of year, sing on every opportunity. Again, as another cause of enjoyment, all ranks mingle—women and children, masters and servants, every one takes part in the

sacred gathering. These various circumstances may account for the joviality, traditional from age to age, which breaks forth in these last fine days of the year, and of which the remembrance inspired Rabelais of yore to give a Bacchic form to his great work.

Jacques and Madeleine, who had always been ailing, had never before taken part in the vintage, nor had I, and they found childlike delight in seeing me a sharer in their pleasure. Their mother had promised to come with us. We had been to Villaines, where the country baskets are made, and had ordered very nice ones; we four were to gather the fruit off a few rows left for us; but we all promised not to eat too many grapes. The *Gros Co* of the Touraine vineyards is so delicious eaten fresh, that the finest table grapes are scorned in comparison. Jacques made me solemnly promise that I would go to see no other vineyards, but devote myself exclusively to the *Clos* of Clochegourde. Never had these two little creatures, usually so wan and pale, been so bright, and rosy, and excited, and busy as they were that morning. They chattered for the sake of chattering, went and came and trotted about for no visible reason but that, like other children, they had too much vitality to work off; Monsieur and Madame de Mortsauf had never seen them so well. And I was a child with them, more a child than they were perhaps, for I too hoped for my harvest.

The weather was glorious; we went up to the vineyards and spent half the day there. How we vied with each other in seeking the finest bunches, in seeing which could fill a basket first! They ran to and fro from the vines to their mother, every bunch was shown to her as it was gathered. And she laughed the hearty laugh of youth when, following the little girl with my basketful, I said, in a mocking spirit of playfulness, like Madeleine, "And look at mine, too, mamma."

"Dear child," she said to me, "do not get too hot." Then,

stroking my hair and my neck, she gave me a little slap on the cheek, adding, "Thou art in a bath!"

This is the only time I ever received from her that verbal caress, the lover's *tu*. I stood looking at the pretty hedgerows full of red berries, of sloes, and blackberries; I listened to the children shouting; I gazed at the girls pulling the grapes, at the cart full of vats, at the men with baskets on their backs—I stamped every detail on my memory, down to the young almond tree by which she was standing, bright, flushed, and laughing, under her parasol.

Then I set to work to gather the fruit with a steady, wordless perseverance, and a slow, measured step that left my spirit free. I tasted the ineffable pleasure of a physical employment such as carries life along, regulating the rush of passion which, but for this mechanical movement, was very near a conflagration. I learned how much wisdom comes of labor, and I understood monastic rule.

For the first time in many days, the Count was neither sullen nor vicious. His boy so well, the future Duc de Lenoncourt-Mortsauf, rosy and fair, and smeared with grape-juice, gladdened his heart. This being the last day of the vintage, the general had promised his people a dance in the evening in the field by Clochegourde, in honor of the return of the Bourbons; thus the festival was to be complete for everybody. On our way home, the Countess took my arm; she leaned on me so as to let my heart feel all the weight of her hand, like a mother who longs to impart her gladness, and said in my ear—

"You bring us good fortune."

And to me, knowing of her sleepless nights, her constant alarms, and her past life, through which she had indeed been supported by the hand of God, but in which all had been barren and weariful, these words, spoken in her deep, soft voice, brought such joys as no woman in the world could ever give me again.

"The monotonous misery of my days is broken and life is bright with hope," she added after a pause. "Oh, do not desert me! Do not betray my innocent superstitions! Be my eldest, the providence of the little ones."

This is no romance, Natalie; none can discern the infinite depth of such feelings who have not in early life sounded the great lakes on whose shores we live. If to many souls the passions have been as lava-torrents flowing between parched banks, are there not others in which a passion subdued by insurmountable obstacles has filled the crater of the volcano with limpid waters?

We had one more such festival. Madame de Mortsauf wished that her children should learn something of practical life, and know by what hard labor money must be earned; she had, therefore, given each certain revenues depending on the chances of produce. Jacques was owner of the walnut crop, Madeleine of the chestnuts. A few days after we went forth to the chestnut and walnut harvests. Thrashing Madeleine's chestnut trees; hearing the nuts fall, their spiny husks making them rebound from the dry velvety moss of the unfertile soil on which chestnuts grow; seeing the solemn gravity of the little girl as she looked at the piles, calculating their value, which meant for her such pleasures as she could give herself without control; then the congratulations of Manette, the children's maid, the only person who ever filled the Countess' place with them; the lesson to be derived from this little business, of toil requisite to reap the humblest harvest, so often imperiled by variation of climate—all these things made up a little drama, the children's ingenuous delight forming a charming contrast with the sober hues of early autumn.

Madeleine had a loft of her own where I saw the brown crop safely stowed, sharing in her delight. I am thrilled to this day as I remember the clatter of each basketful of chestnuts rolling out over the yellow chaff that formed the flooring. The Count bought some for the house; the farm bailiffs, the

laborers, every one in the neighborhood found buyers from "Mignonne," a kindly name which the peasants in those parts are ready to give even to a stranger, but which seemed especially appropriate to Madeleine.

Jacques was not so lucky for his walnut harvest. It rained several days; but I comforted him by advising him to keep his nuts for a time and sell them later. Monsieur de Chessel had told me that the walnut crop had failed in le Brehémont, in the district around Amboise, and in the country about Vouvray. Nut oil is very largely used in Touraine. Jacques would make at least forty sous on each tree, and there were two hundred trees, so the sum would be considerable. He meant to buy himself a saddle and bridle for a pony. His wish led to a general discussion, and his father led him to consider the uncertainty of such returns, and the need for making a reserve fund for the years when the trees should be bare of fruit, so as to secure an average income.

I read the Countess' heart in her silence; she was delighted to see Jacques listening to his father, and the father winning back some of the reverence he had forfeited, and all thanks to the subterfuge she had arranged. I told you when describing this woman that no earthly language can ever do justice to her character and genius. While these little scenes are enacted the spirit revels in them with joy, but does not analyze them; but how clearly they afterward stand out against the gloomy background of a life of vicissitude! They shine like diamonds, set amid thoughts of baser alloy and regrets that melt into reminiscences of vanished happiness! Why should the names of the two estates Monsieur and Madame de Mortsauf had lately purchased, and which gave them so much to do—la Cassine and la Rhétorière—touch me far more than the greatest names in the Holy Land or in Greece? "*Qui aime, le dire*" (Let those who love tell), says La Fontaine. Those names have the talismanic power of the starry words used in sorcery, they are magical to me; they call up sleeping images

which stand forth and speak to me; they carry me back to that happy valley; they create a sky and landscape. But has not conjuration always been possible in the realm of the spiritual world? So you need not wonder to find me writing to you of such familiar scenes. The smallest details of that simple and almost homely life were so many ties, slight as they must seem, which bound me closely to the Countess.

The children's future prospects troubled Madame de Mortsauf almost as much as their feeble health. I soon saw the truth of what she had told me with regard to her unconfessed importance in the business of the property, which I gradually understood as I studied such facts about the country as a statesman ought to know. After ten years' struggles Madame de Mortsauf had at last reformed the management of the lands. She had *quartered* them—*mis en quatre*—a term used in those parts for the rotation of crops, a method of sowing wheat on the same field only once in four years, so that the land yields some crop every year instead of lying fallow. To overcome the pig-headed resistance of the peasantry, it had been necessary to cancel the old leases, to divide the property into four large holdings, and farm on half-profits, the system peculiar to Touraine and the adjacent provinces. The landowner provides the dwelling and outbuildings, and supplies seed to working farmers, with whom he agrees to share the cost of husbandry and the profits. The division is undertaken by a *métivier* (a farm bailiff), who is authorized to take the half due to the proprietor; and this system, a costly one, is complicated by the way of keeping accounts, which leads to constant changes in the estimate of the shares.

The Countess had persuaded Monsieur de Mortsauf to keep a fifth farm, consisting of the enclosed lands round Clochegourde, in his own hands, partly to give him occupation, but also to demonstrate to the sharefarmers by the evidence of facts the superiority of the new methods. Being able here to manage the crops, she had by degrees, with womanly tena-

city, had two of the farmhouses rebuilt on the plan of the farms in Artois and Flanders. Her scheme was self-evident. She intended, when the leases on half-profits should expire, to make these two farms into first-class holdings and let them for rent in money to active and intelligent tenants, so as to simplify the returns to Clochegourde. Dreading lest she should die the first, she was anxious to leave to the Count an income easily collected, and to the children a property which no misadventure could make ruinous.

By this time the fruit trees planted ten years since were in full bearing. The hedges which guaranteed the boundaries against any dispute in the future had all grown up. The poplars and elms were flourishing. With the recent additions, and by introducing the new system of culture, the estate of Clochegourde, divided into four large holdings, might be made to yield sixteen thousand francs a year in hard cash, at a rent of four thousand francs for each farm; exclusive of the vineyards, the two hundred acres of coppice adjoining and the home farm. The lanes from these farms were all to come into an avenue leading straight from Clochegourde to the Chinon road. The distance to Tours by this road was no more than five leagues; farmers would certainly not be lacking, especially at a time when everybody was talking of the Count's improvements and his success, and the increased return from his land.

She proposed to spend about fifteen thousand francs on each of the newly purchased properties, to convert the houses on them into fine homesteads so as to let them to advantage after farming them for a year or two, while placing there as steward a man named Martineau, the most trustworthy of the bailiffs, who would presently be out of place; for the leases of the four half-profit farms were about to fall in, and the moment was coming for uniting them into two holdings and letting them for a rent in money.

These very simple plans, complicated only by the necessary

outlay of more than thirty thousand francs, were at this time the subject of long discussions between her and the Count—terrible arguments, in which she was emboldened only by the thought of the children's interests. The mere thought, "If I were to die to-morrow, what would become of them?" made her sick at heart. Only gentle and peaceable souls, to whom rage is impossible, and who long to see the peace they feel within them reign around them, can ever understand what an effort such a contest needs, what rushes of blood oppress the heart before the struggle is faced, what exhaustion follows after a battle in which nothing has been won. Just now, when her children were less wan, less starveling, and more full of life, for the fruitful season had had its effect on them; just now, when she could watch their play with moistened eyes, and a sense of satisfaction that renewed her strength by reviving her spirits, the poor woman was a victim to the insulting thrusts and cutting innuendoes of determined antagonism. The Count, startled by these changes, denied their utility and their possibility with rigid oppugnancy. To all conclusive reasoning he answered with the argument of a child who should doubt the heat of the sun in summer. The Countess won at last; the triumph of commonsense over folly salved her wounds, and she forgot them.

On that day she walked to la Cassine and la Rhétorière, to give orders for the buildings. The Count went on in front alone, the children came between, and we followed slowly behind, for she was talking in the sweet, low voice which made her speech sound like tiny ripples of the sea murmuring on fine sand.

She was "sure of success," she said. A rival service was about to start on the road between Chinon and Tours under the management of an active man, a cousin of Manette's, and he wanted to rent a large farmstead on the high-road. He had a large family; the eldest son would drive the coach, the second would attend to the heavy carrying business, while the

father, settled at la Rabelaye, a farm half-way on the road, would attend to the horses and cultivate the ground to advantage with the manure from the stables. She had already found a tenant for the second farm, la Baude, lying close to Clochegourde; one of the four half-profit farmers, an honest, intelligent, and active man, who understood the advantages of the new system, had offered to take it on lease. As to la Cassine and la Rhétorière, the soil was the best in all the country-side; when once the houses were ready and the fields fairly started, they would only have to be advertised at Tours. Thus, in two years, the estate would bring in about twenty-four thousand francs a year; la Gravelotte, the farm in le Maine recovered by Monsieur de Mortsauf, had just been let for nine years, at seven thousand francs a year; the Count's pension as major-general was four thousand francs; if all this could not be said to constitute a fortune, at any rate it meant perfect ease; and later, perhaps, further improvements might allow of her going some day to Paris to attend to Jacques' education—two years hence, when the heir presumptive's health should be stronger.

How tremulously did she speak the word *Paris!* And I was at the bottom of this plan; she wanted to be as little apart as possible from her friend.

At these words I caught fire; I told her she little knew me; that, without saying anything to her, I had planned to finish my own education by studying night and day so as to become Jacques' tutor; for that I could never endure to think of any other young man at home in her house.

On this she grew very serious.

"No, Félix," said she. "This is not to be, any more than your becoming a priest. Though you have by that speech touched my motherly heart to the quick, the woman cares for you too well to allow you to become a victim to your fidelity. The reward of such devotion would be that you would be irremediably looked down upon, and I could do nothing to

prevent it. No, no! Never let me injure you in any way. You, the Vicomte de Vandenesse, a tutor? You, whose proud motto is "*Ne se Vend*" (For no guerdon). If you were Richelieu himself, your life would be marred for ever. It would be the greatest grief to your family. My friend, you do not know all the insolence such a woman as my mother can throw into a patronizing glance, all the humiliation into one word, all the scorn into a bow!"

"And, so long as you love me, what do I care for the world?"

She affected not to hear, and went on—

"Though my father is most kind and willing to give me anything I may ask, he would not forgive you for having put yourself into a false position and would refuse to help you on in the world. I would not see you tutor to the Dauphin! Take society as you find it, make no blunders in life. My friend, this offer, prompted by——"

"By love," I put in.

"No, by charity," said she, restraining her tears; "this crazy proposition throws a light on your character; your heart will be your enemy. I insist henceforth on my right to tell you certain truths; give my woman's eyes the care of seeing for you sometimes.

"Yes, buried here in Clochegourde, I mean to look on silent but delighted at your advancement. As to a tutor, be easy on that score; we will find some good old abbé, some learned and venerable jesuit, and my father will gladly pay the sum needed for the education of the boy who is to bear his name. Jacques is my pride! And he is eleven years old," she added after a pause. "But he, like you, looks younger. I thought you were thirteen when I first saw you."

By this time we had reached la Cassine; Jacques and Madeleine and I followed her about as children follow their mother; but we were in the way. I left her for a moment and went into the orchard, where the elder Martineau, the

gamekeeper, with his son the bailiff, were marking trees to be cut down; they discussed the matter as eagerly as if it were their own concern. I saw by this how much the Countess was beloved. I expressed myself to this effect to a day laborer who, with one foot on his spade and his elbow on the handle, was listening to the two men learned in pomology.

"Oh yes, sir," said he, "she is a good woman, and not proud, like those apes at Azay, who would leave us to die like dogs rather than give a sou extra on a yard of ditching. The day when she leaves the place, the Virgin will cry over it, and we too. She knows what is due to her, but she knows what hard times we have and considers us."

With what delight I gave all my spare cash to that man!

A few days after this a pony was bought for Jacques; his father, a capital horseman, wished to inure him very gradually to the fatiguing exercise of riding. The boy had a neat little outfit that he had bought with the price of his walnuts. The morning when he had his first lesson, riding with his father and followed by Madeleine's shouts of glee as she danced on the lawn round which Jacques was trotting, was to the Countess her first high festival as a mother. Jacques' pretty collar had been worked by her hands; he had a little sky-blue cloth coat, with a varnished leather belt around the waist, white tucked trousers, and a Scotch cap over his thick, fair curls; he really was charming to look upon. All the servants of the household came out to share the family joy, and the little heir smiled as he passed his mother, without a sign of fear.

This first act of manliness in the child who had so often been at death's door, the hope of a happier future of which this ride seemed the promise, making him look so bright, so handsome, so healthy—what a delightful reward! Then the father's joy, looking young again, and smiling for the first

time in many weeks, the satisfaction that shone in the eyes of the assembled servants, the glee of the old Lenoncourt huntsman, who had come over from Tours, and who, seeing how well the child held his bridle, called out, "Bravo, Monsieur le Vicomte!"—all this was too much for Madame de Mortsauf and she melted into tears. She, who was so calm in distress, was too weak to control her joy as she admired her boy riding round and round on the path where she had so often mourned him by anticipation as she carried him to and fro in the sun.

She leaned on my arm without reserve, and said, as she turned her eyes on me—

"I feel as if I had never been unhappy. Stay with us to-day."

The lesson ended, Jacques flew into his mother's arms, and she clutched him to her bosom with the vehemence that comes of excessive delight, kissing and fondling him again and again. Madeleine and I went off to make two splendid nosegays to dress the dinner-table in honor of the young horseman.

When we returned to the drawing-room, the Countess said to me—

"The fifteenth of October is indeed a high day! Jacques has had his first riding lesson and I have set the last stitch in my piece of work."

"Well, then, Blanche," said the Count, laughing, "I will pay you for it."

He offered her his arm and led her into the inner courtyard, where she found a carriage, a present from her father, for which the Count had bought a pair of horses in England; they had arrived with those sent to the Duc de Lenoncourt. The old huntsman had arranged all this in the courtyard during the riding lesson. We got into the carriage and went off to see the line cleared for the avenue that was to lead directly into the Chinon road, and that was cut straight

through the new property acquired by the Count. On our return the Countess said to me, with deep melancholy—

"I am too happy; happiness is to me like an illness, it overpowers me and I fear lest it should vanish like a dream."

I was too desperately in love not to be jealous, and I had nothing to give her! In my fury I tried to think of some way of dying for her.

She asked me what thoughts had clouded my eyes, and I told her frankly; she was more touched than by any gifts and poured balm on my spirit when, taking me out on the terrace steps, she whispered to me—

"Love me as my aunt loved me—is not that to give your life for me? And if I take it so, is it not to lay me under an obligation every hour of the day?"

"It was high-time I should finish my piece of work," she went on, as we returned to the drawing-room, and I kissed her hand as a renewal of my allegiance. "You perhaps do not know, Félix, why I set myself that long task. Men find a remedy against their troubles in the occupations of life; the bustle of business diverts their minds; but we women have no support in ourselves to help us to endure. In order to be able to smile at my children and my husband when I was possessed by gloomy ideas, I felt the need of keeping my grief in check by physical exertion. I thus avoided the collapse that follows any great effort of resolve, as well as the lightning strokes of excitement. The action of lifting my arm in measured time lulled my brain and acted on my spirit when the storm was raging, giving it the rest of ebb and flow and regulating its emotions. I told my secrets to the stitches, do you see? Well, as I worked the last chain, I was thinking too much of you! Yes, my friend, far too much. What you put into your nosegays I imparted to my patterns."

The dinner was a cheerful one. Jacques, like all children to whom we show kindness, jumped upon me and threw his arms around my neck when he saw the flowers I had picked

him by way of a crown. His mother pretended to be angry at this infidelity to her, and the dear child gave her the newly made posy she affected to covet, you know how ingenuously and sweetly.

In the evening we played backgammon, I against Monsieur and Madame de Mortsauf, and the Count was charming. Finally, at nightfall, they walked with me as far as the turning to Frapesle, in one of those placid evenings when the harmony of nature gives added depth to our feelings in proportion as it soothes their vividness.

It had been a day by itself to this hapless woman, a spark of light that often shone caressingly on her memory in days of difficulty.

For, indeed, before long the riding lessons became a subject of contention. The Countess, not unreasonably, was afraid of the Count's hard speeches to his little son. Jacques was already growing thinner, and dark rings came around his blue eyes; to save his mother, he would suffer in silence. I suggested a remedy by advising him to tell his father he was tired when the Count was angry, but this was an insufficient palliative, so the old huntsman was to teach him instead of his father, who would not give up his pupil without many struggles. Outcries and discussions began again; the Count found a text for his perpetual fault-finding in the ingratitude of wives, and twenty times a day he threw the carriage, the horses, and the liveries in her teeth.

Finally, one of those disasters occurred which are a stalking-horse for such tempers and such maladies of the brain; the expense of the works at la Cassine and la Rhétorière, where the walls and floors were found to be rotten, amounted to half as much again as the estimate. A clumsy fellow at work there came to report this to Monsieur de Mortsauf, instead of telling the Countess privately. This became the subject of a quarrel, begun mildly, but gradually increasing in bitterness; and the Count's hypochondria, which for some days had been

in abeyance, now claimed arrears from the unfortunate Henriette.

That morning I set out from Frapesle, after breakfast, at half-past ten, to make my nosegays at Clochegourde with Madeleine. The little girl brought out the two vases, setting them on the balustrade of the terrace, and I wandered from the gardens to the fields, seeking the lovely but rare flowers of autumn. As I returned from my last expedition, I no longer saw my little lieutenant in her pink sash and frilled cape, and I heard a commotion in the house.

"The general," said Madeleine, in tears, and with her the name was one of aversion for her father, "the general is scolding our mother; do go and help her."

I flew up the steps and went into the drawing-room, where neither the Count nor his wife saw or noticed me. Hearing the madman's noisy outcries, I first shut all the doors, and then came back, for I had seen that Henriette was as white as her gown.

"Never marry, Félix," exclaimed the Count excitedly. "A wife has the devil for her counselor; the best of them would invent evil if it did not exist. They are all brute beasts."

Then I had to listen to arguments without beginning and without end. Monsieur de Mortsauf, recurring to his original refusal, now repeated the sottish remarks of the peasants who objected to the new system. He declared that if he had taken the management of Clochegourde, they would have been twice as rich by now. He worded his blasphemies with insulting violence; he swore, he rushed from pillar to post, he moved and banged all the furniture, and in the middle of a sentence he would stop and declare that his marrow was on fire, or his brain running away in a stream, like his money. His wife was ruining him! Wretched man, of the thirty-odd thousand francs a year he possessed, she had brought him more than twenty thousand. The fortune of the Duke and

Duchess, bringing in fifty thousand francs a year, was entailed on Jacques.

The Countess smiled haughtily, and gazed out at the sky.

"Yes!" he cried; "you, Blanche, are my tormentor. You are killing me! You want to be rid of me! You are a monster of hypocrisy! And she laughs! Do you know why she can laugh, Félix?"

I said nothing, and hung my head.

"This woman," he went on, answering his own question, "denies me all happiness—she is no more mine than yours, and calls herself my wife! She bears my name, but she fulfills none of the duties which laws, human and divine, require of her; she lies to God and man. She exhausts me with long walks that I may leave her in peace; I disgust her; she hates me, she does all she can to live the life of a girl. And she is driving me mad by imposing privations on me—for everything goes to my poor head. She is burning me at a slow fire and believes herself a saint—that woman takes the sacrament every month!"

The Countess was by this time weeping bitterly, humiliated by the disgrace of this man, to whom she could only say by way of remonstrance: "Monsieur! Monsieur! Monsieur!"

Although the Count's words made me blush for him as much as for Henriette, they moved me deeply, for they found a response in the instinct of chastity and delicacy which is, so to speak, the very material of a first love.

"She lives a maiden at my expense!" cried the Count, and again his wife exclaimed—

"Monsieur!"

"What do you mean," he went on, "by your pertinacious *monsieur?* Am I not your master? Must I teach you to know it?"

He went toward her, thrusting out his white, wolf-like face, that was really hideous, for his yellow eyes had an expression that made him look like a ravenous animal coming out of a

wood. Henriette slid off her chair on to the floor to avoid the blow which was not struck, for she lost consciousness as she fell, completely broken.

The Count was like an assassin who feels the blood-jet of his victim; he stood amazed. I raised the poor woman in my arms, and the Count allowed me to lift her as if he felt himself unworthy to carry her; but he went first and opened the door of the bedroom next the drawing-room, a sacred spot I had never entered. I set the Countess on her feet, and supported her with my arm round her body, while Monsieur de Mortsauf took off the upper coverlet, the eiderdown quilt, and the bedclothes; then, together, we laid her down just as she was. As she recovered consciousness, Henriette signed to us to undo her waistband; Monsieur de Mortsauf found a pair of scissors, and cut through everything. I held some salts to her nose, and she presently opened her eyes. The Count went away, ashamed rather than grieved.

Two hours went by in perfect silence, Henriette holding my hand and pressing it without being able to speak. Now and again she looked up to make me understand that she longed only for peace without a sound; then there was a moment's truce, when she raised herself on her elbow and murmured in my ear—

"Unhappy man! If you could but know——"

She laid her head on the pillow again. The remembrance of past sufferings, added to her present anguish, brought on again the nervous spasms, which I had soothed only by the magnetism of love—its effects were hitherto unknown to me, but I had used it instinctively. I now supported her with gentle and tender firmness, and she gave me such looks as brought tears to my eyes.

When the convulsive attack was over, I smoothed her disordered hair—the first and only time I ever touched it—then again I held her hand, and sat a long time looking at the room—a brown-and-gray room, with a bed simply hung with

I RAISED THE POOR WOMAN IN MY ARMS.

D. MURRAY SMITH

cotton chintz, a table covered with an old-fashioned toilet set, a poor sofa with a stitched mattress. What poetry I found here! What indifference to personal luxury! Her only luxury was exquisite neatness. The noble cell of a married nun, stamped with holy resignation, where the only adornments were a crucifix by her bed, and over it the portrait of her aunt; then, on each side of the holy-water shell, sketches of her two children, done in pencil by herself, and locks of their hair when they were babies. What a hermitage for a woman whose appearance in the world of fashion would have cast the loveliest into the shade!

Such was the retreat where tears were so constantly shed by this daughter of an illustrious race, at this moment swamped in bitterness, and rejecting the love that might have brought her consolation. A hidden and irremediable misfortune! The victim in tears for the torturer, the torturer in tears for his victim.

When the children and the maid came in, I left her. The Count was waiting for me; he already regarded me as a mediator between his wife and himself; and he grasped my hands, exclaiming, "Stay with us; stay with us, Félix!"

"Unluckily," said I, "Monsieur de Chessel has company; it would not do for his guests to wonder at the reason for my absence; but I will return after dinner."

He came out with me and walked to the lower gate without saying a word; then he accompanied me all the way to Frapesle, unconscious of what he was doing. When there, I said to him—

"In heaven's name, Monsieur le Comte, leave the management of your house to her if she wishes it, and do not torment her."

"I have not long to live," he replied seriously; "she will not suffer long on my account; I feel that my head will burst."

He turned away in a fit of involuntary egoism.

After dinner I went back to inquire for Madame de Mort-

sauf, and found her better already. If these were for her the joys of marriage, if such scenes were to be frequently repeated, how could she live? What slow, unpunished murder! I had seen this evening the indescribable torture by which the Count racked his wife. Before what tribunal could such a case be brought?

These considerations bewildered me: I could say nothing to Henriette, but I spent the night in writing to her. Of three or four letters that I wrote, I have nothing left but this fragment, which did not satisfy me; but though it seems to me to express nothing, or to say too much about myself when I ought only to have thought of her, it will show you the state of my mind.

To Madame de Mortsauf.

"How many things I had to say to you this evening that I had thought of on the way and forgot when I saw you! Yes, as soon as I see you, dearest Henriette, I feel my words out of harmony with the reflections from your soul that add to your beauty. And, then, by your side, I feel such infinite happiness that the immediate experience effaces every memory of what has gone before. I am born anew each time to a larger life, like a traveler who, as he climbs a crag, discovers a new horizon. In every conversation with you I add some new treasure to my vast treasury. This, I believe, is the secret of long and indefatigable attachments. So I can only speak of you to yourself when I am away from you. In your presence I am too much dazzled to see you, too happy to analyze my happiness, too full of you to be myself, made too eloquent by you to speak to you, too eager to seize the present to be able to remember the past. Understand this constant intoxication, and you will forgive its aberrations. When I am with you I can only feel.

"Nevertheless, I will dare to tell you, dear Henriette, that

never in all the joy you have given me, have I felt any rapture to compare with the delights that filled my soul yesterday when, after the dreadful storm, in which, with superhuman courage, you did battle with evil, you came back to me alone in the twilight of your room, whither the unfortunate scene had led me. I alone was there to know the light that can shine in a woman when she returns from the portal of death to the gates of life, and the dawn of a new birth tinges her brow. How harmonious was your voice! How trivial words seemed —even yours—as the vague recollection of past suffering made itself heard in your adored tones, mingled with the divine consolations, by which you at last reassured me as you thus uttered your first thoughts! I knew that you shone with every choicest human gift, but yesterday I found a new Henriette, who would be mine if God should grant it. I had a glimpse yesterday of an inscrutable being, free from the bonds of the flesh, which hinder us from exhaling the fire of the soul. You were lovely in your dejection, majestic in your weakness.

"I found something yesterday more beautiful than your beauty, something sweeter than your voice, a light more glorious than the light of your eyes, a fragrance for which there is no name—yesterday your soul was visible and tangible. Oh! it was torment to me that I could not open my heart and take you into it to revive you. In short, I yesterday got over the respectful fear I have felt for you, for did not your weakness draw us nearer to each other? I learned the joy of breathing as I breathed with you, when the spasm left you free to inhale our air. What prayers flew up to heaven in one moment! Since I did not die of rushing through the space I crossed to beseech God to leave you to me yet awhile, it is not possible to die of joy or of grief.

"That moment has left, buried in my soul, memories which can never rise to the surface without bringing tears to my eyes; every joy will make the furrow longer, every grief will make it deeper. Yes, the fears that racked my soul yesterday

will remain a standard of comparison for all my sorrows to come, as the happiness you have given me, dear perpetual first-thought of my life, will prevail over every joy that the hand of God may ever vouchsafe me. You have made me understand Divine love, that trustful love, which, secure in its strength and permanency, knows neither suspicion nor jealousy."

The deepest melancholy gnawed at my heart; the sight of this home was heart-breaking to a youth so fresh and new to social emotions—the sight, at the threshold of the world, of a bottomless gulf, a dead sea. This hideous concentration of woes suggested infinite reflections, and at my very first steps in social life I had found a standard so immense that any other scenes could but look small when measured by it. My melancholy left Monsieur and Madame de Chessel to suppose that my love affair was luckless, so that I was happy in not injuring my noble Henriette by my passion.

On the following day, on going into the drawing-room, I found her alone. She looked at me for a moment, holding out her hand; she said, "Will the friend always persist in being too tender?" The tears rose to her eyes; she got up, and added in a tone of desperate entreaty, "Never write to me again in such a strain."

Monsieur de Mortsauf was most friendly. The Countess had recovered her courage and her serene brow; but her pallor showed traces of yesterday's trouble which, though subdued, was not extinct.

In the evening, as we took a walk, the autumn leaves rustling under our feet, she said—

"Pain is infinite, joy has its limits," a speech which revealed the extent of her sufferings by comparison with her transient happiness.

"Do not calumniate life," said I. "You know nothing of love; there are delights which flame up to the heavens."

"Hush," said she, "I do not want to know them. A Greenlander would die in Italy! I am calm and happy in your society, I can tell you all my thoughts; do not destroy my confidence. Why should you not have the virtue of a priest and the charms of a free man?"

"You could make me swallow a cup of hemlock," I replied, laying her hand on my heart, which was beating rapidly.

"Again!" she said, withdrawing her hand as if she felt some sudden pain. "Do you want to deprive me of the melancholy joy of feeling my bleeding wounds stanched by a friend's hand? Do not add to my miseries; you do not yet know them all, and the most secret are the hardest of all to swallow. If you were a woman, you would understand the distress and bitterness into which her proud spirit is plunged when she is the object of attentions which make up for nothing, and are supposed to make up for everything. For a few days now I shall be courted and petted; he will want to be forgiven for having put himself in the wrong. I could now gain assent to the most unreasonable desires. And I am humiliated by this servility, by caresses which will cease as soon as he thinks I have forgotten everything. Is it not a terrible condition of life to owe the kindness of one's tyrant only to his errors——"

"To his crimes," I eagerly put in.

"Beside," she went on, with a sad smile, "I do not know how to make use of this temporary advantage. At this moment I am in the position of a knight who would never strike a fallen foe. To see the man I ought to honor on the ground, to raise him only to receive fresh blows, to suffer more from his fall than he himself does, and consider myself dishonored by taking advantage of a transient success, even for a useful end, to waste my strength, and exhaust all the resources of my spirit in these ignominious struggles, to rule only at the moment when I am mortally wounded?—— Death is better!

"If I had no children, I should let myself be carried down

the stream; but if it were not for my covert courage, what would become of them? I must live for them, however terrible life may be. You talk to me of love! Why, my friend, only think of the hell I should fall into if I gave that man—ruthless, as all weak men are—the right to despise me? I could not endure a suspicion! The purity of my life is my strength. Virtue, my dear child, has holy waters in which we may bathe, and emerge born again to the love of God!"

"Listen, dear Henriette, I have only a week more to stay here, and I want——"

"What, you are leaving us?" said she, interrupting me.

"Well, I must know what my father has decided on for me. It is nearly three months——"

"I have not counted the days," she cried, with the vehemence of agitation. Then she controlled herself, and added, "Let us take a walk; we will go to Frapesle."

She called the Count and the children, and sent for a shawl; then, when all were ready, she, so deliberate and so calm, had a fit of activity worthy of a Parisian, and we set out for Frapesle in a body, to pay a visit which the Countess did not owe.

She made an effort to talk to Madame de Chessel, who, fortunately, was prolix in her replies. The Count and Monsieur de Chessel discussed business. I was afraid lest Monsieur de Mortsauf should boast of his carriage and horses, but he did not fail in good taste.

His neighbor inquired as to the work he was doing at la Cassine and la Rhétorière. As I heard the question, I glanced at the Count, fancying he would avoid talking of a subject so full of painful memories and so bitter for him; but he demonstrated the importance of improving the methods of agriculture in the district, of building good farmhouses on healthy, well-drained spots; in short, he audaciously appropriated his wife's ideas. I gazed at the Countess and reddened. This want of delicacy in a man who, under certain circumstances, had so much, this oblivion of that direful scene, this adoption

of ideas against which he had rebeled so violently, this belief in himself, petrified me.

When Monsieur de Chessel asked him—

"And do you think you will recover the outlay?"

"And more!" he exclaimed positively.

Such vagaries can only be explained by the word insanity. Henriette, heavenly soul, was beaming. Was not the Count showing himself to be a man of sense, a good manager, an admirable farmer? She stroked Jacques' hair in rapture, delighted for herself and delighted for her boy. What an odious comedy, what a sardonic farce!

At a later time, when the curtain of social life was raised for me, how many Mortsaufs I saw, minus the flashes of chivalry and the religious faith of this man. What strange and cynical power is that which constantly mates the madman with an angel, the man of genuine and poetic feelings with a mean woman, a little man with a tall wife, a hideous dwarf with a superb and beautiful creature; which gives the lovely Juana a Captain Diard—whose adventures at Bordeaux you already know; pairs Madame de Beauséant with a d'Ajuda, Madame d'Aiglemont with her husband, the Marquis d'Espard with his wife! I have, I confess, long sought the solution of this riddle. I have investigated many mysteries, I have discovered the reasons for many natural laws, the interpretation of a few sacred hieroglyphics, but of this I know nothing; I am still studying it as if it were some India puzzle figure, of which the Brahmins have kept the symbolical purpose secret. Here the Spirit of Evil is too flagrantly the master, and I dare not accuse God. Irremediable disaster! who takes pleasure in plotting you? Can it be that Henriette and her unrecognized philosopher were right? Does their mysticism contain the general purport of the human race?

The last days I spent in this district were those of leafless autumn, darkened with clouds which sometimes hid the sky of Touraine, habitually clear and mild at that fine season of

the year. On the day before I left, Madame de Mortsauf took me out on the terrace before dinner.

"My dear Félix," said she, after taking a turn in silence under the bare trees, "you are going into the world, and I shall follow you there in thought. Those who have suffered much have lived long. Never suppose that lonely spirits know nothing of the world; they see and judge it. If I am to live in my friend's life, I do not wish to be uneasy, either in his heart or in his conscience. In the heat of the fray it is sometimes very difficult to remember all the rules, so let me give you some motherly advice, as to a son.

"On the day when you leave, dear child, I will give you a long letter in which you will read my thoughts as a woman on the world, on men, on the way to meet difficulties in that great seething of interests. Promise me not to read it till you are in Paris. This entreaty is the expression of one of the sentimental fancies which are the secret of a woman's heart; I do not think it is possible to understand it, but perhaps we should be sorry if it were understood. Leave me these little paths where a woman loves to wander alone."

"I promise," said I, kissing her hands.

"Ah!" said she, "but I have another pledge to ask of you; but you must promise beforehand to take it."

"Oh, certainly!" I said, thinking it was some vow of fidelity.

"It has nothing to do with me," she went on, with a bitter smile. "Félix, never gamble in any house whatever; I make no exception."

"I will never play," I promised.

"That is well," said she. "I have found you a better use to make of the time you would spend at cards. You will see that while others are certain to lose sooner or later, you will always win."

"How?"

"The letter will tell you," she replied gaily, in a way to

deprive her injunctions of the serious character which are given to those of our grandmothers.

The Countess talked to me for about an hour and proved the depth of her affection by betraying how closely she had studied me during these three months. She had entered into the secret corners of my heart, trying to infuse her own into it; her voice was modulated and convincing, showing as much by the tone as by her words how many links already bound us to each other.

"If only you could know," she said in conclusion, "with what anxiety I shall follow you on your way, with what joy if you go straight, with what tears if you bruise yourself against corners! Believe me, my affection is a thing apart; it is at once involuntary and deliberately chosen. Oh! I long to see you happy, powerful, respected—you who will be to me as a living dream."

She made me weep. She was at once mild and terrible. Her feelings were too frankly expressed, and too pure to give the smallest hope to a man thirsting for happiness. In return for my flesh, left torn and bleeding in her heart, she shed on mine the unfailing and unblemished light of the divine love that can only satisfy the soul. She bore me up to heights whither the shining wings of the passion that had led me to kiss her shoulders could never carry me; to follow her flight a man would have needed to wear the white pinions of a seraph.

"On every occasion," said I, "I will think, 'What would my Henriette say?'"

"Yes, I want to be both the Star and the Sanctuary," said she, alluding to my childhood's dreams, and trying to realize them, so as to cheat my desires.

"You will be my religion, my light, my all," I cried in a voice of rapture.

"No," said she. "I can never be the giver of your pleasures."

She sighed, and gave me a smile of secret sorrow, the smile of a slave in an instant of revolt.

From that day forth she was not merely a woman I loved—she was all I loved best. She dwelt in my heart not as a woman who insists on a place there, whose image is stamped there by devotion or excess of pleasure; no, she had my whole heart, and was indispensable to the action of its muscles; she became what Beatrice was to the Florentine poet, or the spotless Laura to the Venetian—the mother of great thoughts, the unknown cause of saving determinations, my support for the future, the light that shines in darkness like a lily among sombre shrubs. Yes, she dictated the firm resolve that cut off what was to be burned, that reinstated what was in danger; she endowed me with the fortitude of a Coligny to conquer the conquerors, to rise after defeat, to wear out the stoutest foe.

Next morning, after breakfasting at Frapesle, and taking leave of the hosts who had been so kind to the selfishness of my passion, I went to Clochegourde. Monsieur and Madame de Mortsauf had agreed to drive with me as far as Tours, whence I was to set out for Paris that night. On the way the Countess was affectionately silent; at first she said she had a headache; then she colored at the falsehood, and suddenly mitigated it by saying that she could not but regret to see me depart. The Count invited me to stay with them if, in the absence of the Chessels, I should ever wish to see the valley of the Indre once more. We parted heroically, with no visible tears; but, like many a sickly child, Jacques had a little emotional spasm which made him cry a little; while Madeleine, a woman already, clasped her mother's hand.

"Dear little man!" said the Countess, kissing Jacques passionately.

When I was left alone at Tours, after dinner I was seized by one of those inexplicable rages which only youth ever goes through. I hired a horse, and in an hour and a quarter had

ridden back the whole distance from Tours to Pont de Ruan. There, ashamed of letting my madness be seen, I ran down the road on foot, and stole under the terrace on tiptoe, like a spy. The Countess was not there; I fancied she might be ill. I had still the key of the little gate, and I went in. She was at that very moment coming down the steps with her two children, slowly and sadly, to revel in the tender melancholy of the landscape under the setting sun.

"Why, mother, here is Félix," said Madeleine.

"Yes, I myself," I whispered low. "I asked myself why I was at Tours when I could easily see you once more. Why not gratify a wish which, a week hence, will be beyond fulfillment?"

"Then he is not going away," cried Jacques, skipping and jumping.

"Be quiet, do," said Madeleine; "you will bring out the general.

"This is not right," said the Countess. "What madness!"

The words, spoken through tears in her voice, were indeed a payment of what I may call usurious calculations in love!

"I had forgotten to return you this key," I said, with a smile.

"Then are you never coming back again?" said she.

"Can we ever be apart?" I asked, with a look before which her eyelids fell to veil the mute reply.

I went away after a few minutes spent in the exquisite blankness of souls strung to the pitch at which excitement ends and frenzied ecstasy begins. I went away, riding slowly, and constantly looking back. When I gazed at the valley for the last time from the top of the down, I was struck by the contrast between its aspect now and when I first came to it: was it not then as green, as glowing, as my hopes and desires had sprung and glowed. Now, initiated into the dark

and melancholy mysteries of a home, sharing the pangs of a Christian Niobe, as sad as she, my spirit overshadowed, I saw in the landscape, at this moment, the hues of my ideas. The fields were cleared of their crops, the poplar leaves were falling, and those that remained were rust-color; the vine-canes were burned, the woods wore solemn tints of the russet which kings of yore adopted for their dress, disguising the purple of power under the brown hues of care. And, still in harmony with my thoughts, the valley under the dying yellow rays of the warm sun presented to me a responsive and living image of my soul.

To part from the woman we love is a very simple or a very dreadful thing, depending on one's nature; I suddenly felt myself in an unknown land of which I could not speak the language; I could find nothing to cling to, as I saw only things to which my soul was no longer attached. Then my love unfolded to its fullest extent, and my dear Henriette rose to her full dignity in the desert wherein I lived only by memories of her. It was an image so piously worshiped that I resolved to remain unspotted in the presence of my secret divinity, and in fancy I robed myself in the white garb of a Levite, imitating Petrarch, who never appeared in the presence of Laura but in white from head to foot.

With what impatience did I look forward to the first night when I should be under my father's roof, and might read the letter, which I kept feeling during my journey, as a miser feels a sum in bank-notes that he is obliged to carry about with him. During the night I kissed the paper on which Henriette had expressed her will, where I should find the mysterious effluvium of her touch, whence the tones of her voice would fall on my absorbed mental ear. I have never read her letters but as I read that first one, in bed, and in the deepest silence. I do not know how otherwise we can read the letters written by a woman we love; and yet there are men who mingle the reading of such letters with the busi-

ness of daily life, taking them up and putting them down with odious coolness.

Here, then, Natalie, is the exquisite voice which suddenly sounded in the stillness of the night; here is the sublime figure which rose before me, pointing out the right road from the cross-ways where I now stood:

"It is happiness, my friend, to be obliged to collect the scattered fragments of my experience to transmit it to you and arm you against the perils of the world in which you must guide yourself with skill. I have felt the permitted joys of motherly affection while thinking of you for a few nights. While writing this, a sentence at a time, throwing myself forward into the life you are about to lead, I went now and again to my window. Seeing the turrets of Frapesle in the moonlight, I could say to myself, 'He is asleep, while I am awake for his sake,' a delightful emotion reminding me of the first happy days of my life when I watched Jacques asleep in his cradle, waiting for him to wake to feed him from my bosom. Did you not come to me as a child-man whose soul needed comforting by such precepts as you could not find to nourish it in those dreadful schools where you endured so much, and as we women have the privilege of affording you?

"These trifles will influence your success; they prepare and consolidate it. Will it not be a form of spiritual motherhood thus to create the system to which, as a man, you must refer the various acts of life, a motherhood well understood by the son? Dear Félix, permit me, even if I should make some mistakes, to give our friendship the seal of disinterestedness that will sanctify it; for in giving you up to the world, am I not foregoing every claim on you? But I love you well enough to sacrifice my own joys to your splendid future.

"For nearly four months you have led me to reflect strangely on the laws and habits that govern our time. The conversations I have held with my aunt, of which the purport

must be given to you who have taken her place; the events of Monsieur de Mortsauf's life as he has related them to me; my father's dicta, familiar as he was with the court; the greatest and the smallest facts have risen up in my mind for the benefit of the adopted son whom I see now about to plunge, almost alone, into the throng of men; about to find himself without an adviser in a country where many perish by a heedless misuse of their best qualities, and some succeed by a clever use of their bad ones.

"Above all, reflect on the brief utterance of my opinion on society considered as a whole—for to you a few words are enough. Whether social communities had a divine origin, or are the invention of man, I know not, nor do I know which way they are going; one thing seems certain, and that is: that they exist. As soon as you accept a social life instead of isolation, you are bound to adhere to its constitutional conditions, and to-morrow a sort of contract will be signed between it and you.

"Does society, as now constituted, get more benefit out of a man than it gives? I believe so; but if a man finds in it more burden than profit, or if he purchases too dearly the advantages he derives from it, these are questions for the legislator and not for the individual. You ought, in my opinion, to obey the general law in all things, without disputing it, whether it hurts or advances your interest. Simple as this principle may appear to you, it is not always easy of application; it is like the sap which must permeate the smallest capillary vessels to give life to a tree, to preserve its verdure, develop its bloom, and elaborate its fruit to a magnificence that excites general admiration. My dear, these laws are not all written in a book; customs also create laws; the most important are the least known; there are neither professors, nor treatises, nor any school of that law which guides your actions, your conversation, your external life, and the way in which you must appear in the world and meet fortune.

If you sin against these unwritten laws, you must remain at the bottom of the social community instead of dominating it. Even though this letter should be full of echoes of your own thoughts, suffer me to set before you my woman's policy.

"To formulate society by a theory of personal happiness, grasped at the cost of everybody else, is a disastrous doctrine which, strictly worked out, would lead a man to believe that everything he secretly appropriates, without any offense discernible by the law, by society, or by an individual, is fairly his booty or his due. If this were the charter, then a clever thief would be blameless; a wife faithless to her duties, but undetected, would be happy and good; kill a man, and so long as justice can find no proofs, if you have thus won a crown, like Macbeth, you have done well; your own interest becomes the supreme law; the only question is to navigate, without witnesses or evidence, among the obstacles which law and custom have placed between you and your satisfaction. To a man who takes this view of society, my friend, the problem of making a fortune is reduced to playing a game where the stakes are a million or the galleys, a position in politics or disgrace. And, indeed, the green cloth is not wide enough for all the players; a sort of genius is ever necessary to calculate a *coup*.

"I say nothing of religious beliefs or feelings; we are concerned merely with the wheels of a machine of iron or of gold, and of the immediate results which men look for.

"Dear child of my heart, if you share my horror of this criminal theory, society will resolve itself in your eyes, as in every healthy mind, into a theory of duty. Yes, men owe service to each other under a thousand different forms. In my opinion, the duke and peer has far greater duties to the artisan or the pauper than the artisan or the pauper has to the duke. The obligations laid on us are greater in proportion to the benefits we derive from society, in accordance with the axiom—as true in commerce as in politics—that the burden

of care is always in proportion to the profits accruing. Each one pays his debt in his own way. When our poor farmer at la Rhétorière comes home to bed, tired out with his labor, do you think he has not done his duty? He has undoubtedly fulfilled it better than many a man in a high position. Hence, in contemplating the world in which you desire a place suitable to your intelligence and your faculties, you must start with this maxim as fundamental principle—Never allow yourself to do anything against your own conscience or against the public conscience. Though my insistency may seem to you superfluous, I beseech you—yes, your Henriette beseeches you—to weigh the full sense of these two words. Simple as they may seem, they mean, my dear, that uprightness, honor, loyalty, and good breeding are the surest and quickest roads to fortune. In this selfish world there will be plenty of people to tell you that a man cannot get on by his feelings; that moral considerations, too tenaciously upheld, hamper his progress; you will see ill-bred men, boorish or incapable of taking stock of the future, who will crush a smaller man, be guilty of some rudeness to an old woman, or refuse to endure a few minutes' boredom from an old man, saying they can be of no use; but later you will find these men caught by the thorns they have neglected to break, and missing fortune by a trifle; while another, who has early trained himself to this theory of duty, will meet with no obstacles. He may reach the top more slowly, but his position will be assured, and he will stand firm when others are tottering to a fall.

"When I add that the application of this principle demands, in the first place, a knowledge of manners, you will fancy, perhaps, that my jurisprudence smacks of the court and of the teaching I brought from the house of the Lenoncourts. My dear friend, I attach the greatest importance to this training, trivial as it may seem. The manners of the best company are quite as indispensable as the varied and extensive knowledge

you already possess; they have often taken its place! Some men, ignorant in fact, but gifted with mother-wit, and used to argue soundly from their ideas, have attained to greatness which has evaded the grasp of others, their superiors. I have watched you carefully, Félix, to see whether your education with other youths in various schools had spoilt anything in you. I discerned, with great joy, that you may easily assimilate what you lack—little enough, God knows! In many persons, though brought up in good traditions, manners are merely superficial; for perfect politeness and noble manners come from the heart and a lofty sense of personal dignity. This is why, in spite of their training, some men of birth are of very bad style, while others of humbler rank have a natural good taste and need but a few lessons to acquire the best manners without clumsy imitation. Take the word of a poor woman who will never quit her valley—A noble tone, a gracious simplicity stamped on speech, action, and demeanor—nay, even on the details of a house—constitute a sort of personal poetry, and give an irresistible charm; judge, then, of their effect when they come from the heart.

"Politeness, dear child, consists in forgetting yourself for others; with many people it is no more than a company grimace that fails as soon as self-interest is rubbed too hard and peeps through; then a great man is ignoble. But true politeness—and on this I insist in you, Félix—implies a Christian grace; it is the very flower of charity, and consists in really forgetting self. In memory of Henriette, do not be a fountain without water, have the spirit as well as the form. Do not be afraid of finding yourself too often the dupe of this social virtue; sooner or later you will gather the harvest of so much seed cast apparently to the winds.

"My father remarked, long ago, that one of the most offensive things in superficial politeness is the misuse of promises. When you are asked to do something that is out of your power, refuse point-blank and give no false hopes. On

the other hand, give at once whatever you mean to grant; you will thus be credited with the grace of refusing as well as the grace of conferring a benefit—twofold honesty which really elevates the character. I am not sure that we do not earn more ill-will by a hope deceived than good-will by a favor bestowed.

"Above all, my friend—for such little things are all within my province, and I may emphasize the things I feel that I know—be neither confidential, nor commonplace, nor over-eager—three rocks ahead. Too much confiding in others diminishes their respect, the commonplace is despised, enthusiasm makes us a prey to adventurers. In the first place, dear child, do not have more than two or three friends in the whole course of your life, and your confidence is their right; if you give it to many, you betray them to each other. If you find yourself more intimate with some men than with others, be reserved about yourself, as reserved as though they some day were to be your rivals, your opponents, or your enemies; the chances of life require this. Preserve an attitude neither cold nor perfervid, try to hit the medium line, on which a man may take his stand without compromising himself. Believe me, a man of heart is as far from Philinte's feeble amiability as from Alceste's harsh austerity. The genius of the comic poet shines in the suggestion of a happy medium apprehended by a high-minded spectator; and certainly every one will have a leaning to the absurdities of virtue rather than to the sovereign contempt that hides under the good-nature of egoism, but they will probably preserve themselves from either. As to commonplace civility, though it may make some simpletons pronounce you to be a charming man, those who are accustomed to gauge and value human intellects will estimate your capacity, and you will soon be neglected, for the commonplace is the resource of all weak men. Now, weak men are looked down upon by a world which regards its several members merely as organs—and perhaps it is right:

nature crushes out every ineffectual creature. Indeed, the kindly influence of women is perhaps the outcome of the pleasure they take in struggling with a blind power, and asserting the triumph of the heart's perceptions over the brute strength of matter. But society, a stepmother rather than a mother, adores the children who flatter her vanity.

"As for zeal, that first sublime error of youth which finds real enjoyment in expending its strength, and so begins by being its own dupe before it is duped by others, keep it for the sentiments you share, keep it for woman and for God. Never offer such treasures in the world's mart, nor in the speculations of politics; they will only give you paste for them. You surely must believe the adviser who enjoins noble conduct on you in every particular, when she implores you not to waste yourself in vain; for, unfortunately, men will esteem you in proportion to your usefulness, taking no account of your real worth. To use a figure of speech which will abide in your poetic mind: A cypher, though it be never so large, traced in gold or written in chalk, will never be anything but a cypher. A man of our day said—'Never show zeal!' Zeal verges on trickery, it leads to misunderstandings; you would never find a fervor to match your own in any one above you; kings, like women, think that everything is due to them. Sad as this principle may seem, it is true; but it need not blight the soul. Place your purest feelings in some inaccessible spot where their flowers may be passionately admired, where the artist may lovingly dream over the masterpiece.

"Duties, my friend, are not feelings. To do what you ought is not to do what you please. A man must be ready to die in cold blood for his country, but may give his life for a woman with joy.

"One of the most important rules in the science of manners is almost absolute silence concerning yourself. Allow yourself, for the amusement of it, some day to talk about

yourself to some mere acquaintances; tell them of your ailments, your pleasures, or your business, you will see indifference supervene on affected interest; then, when they are utterly bored, if the mistress of the house does not politely check you, every one will find a clever excuse to withdraw. But if you want to collect about you every man's sympathies, to be regarded as an agreeable and witty man, always pleasant, talk to them of themselves, find an opportunity for bringing them to the front—even by asking questions apparently irrelevant to the individual. Heads will bow, lips will smile at you, and, when you have left, every one will sing your praises. Your conscience and the voice of your heart will warn you of the limit where the cowardice of flattery begins, where the grace of conversation ends.

"One word more about talking in public. My friend, youth is always inclined to a certain hastiness of judgment which does it honor, but which serves it ill. Hence the silence which used to be impressed on the young, who went through an apprenticeship to their betters, during which they studied life; for, of old, the nobility had their apprentices as artists had, pages attached to the masters who maintained them. In these days young people have a sort of hot-house training, sour at that, which leads them to judge severely of actions, thoughts, and books; they cut rashly, and with a new knife. Do not indulge in this bad habit. Your condemnation would be such censure as would hurt many of those about you, and they would all perhaps be less ready to forgive a secret wound than an offense given in public. Young men are not indulgent, because they do not know life and its difficulties. An old critic is kind and mild; a young critic is merciless, for he knows nothing; the other knows all. And then there is at the back of every human action a labyrinth of determining causes, of which God has reserved to Himself the right of final judgment. Be severe only to yourself.

"Your fortune lies before you, but nobody in this world

can make a fortune unaided. My father's house is open to you; visit there frequently; the connections you will form there will be of use to you in a thousand ways. But do not yield an inch of ground to my mother; she crushes those who bend, but admires the spirit of those who resist her. She is like iron which, when hammered, can be welded with iron, but by its mere contact breaks everything less hard than itself. But cultivate my mother's acquaintance; if she likes you, she will introduce you to houses where you will pick up the inevitable knowledge of the world, the art of listening, speaking, replying, coming in, and going away; the tone of speech, the indescribable something, which is not superiority any more than the coat is genius, but without which the greatest talents are never acceptable. I know you well enough to be sure that I am not deluding myself when I picture you beforehand just what I wish you to be—simple in manner, gentle in tone, proud without conceit, deferent to old people, obliging without servility, and, above all, discreet. Use your wit, but not merely to amuse your company, for you must remember that if your superiority irritates a commonplace man, he will be silent; but he will afterward speak of you as 'most amusing,' a word of scorn. Your superiority must always be leonine. Indeed, do not try to please men. In your intercourse with them I would recommend a coolness verging on such a degree of impertinence as cannot offend them; every man respects those who look down on him, and such contempt will win you the favor of women who value you in proportion to your indifference to men. Never be familiar with persons in discredit, not even if they do not merit their reputation, for the world exacts an account alike of our friendships and our aversions; on this point let your judgment be slowly and fully matured, but irrevocable.

"If men to whom you will have nothing to say justify your aversion, your esteem will be valued; and thus you will inspire that unspoken respect which raises a man above his fel-

lows. Thus you will be armed with youth to attract, grace to charm, and prudence to preserve your conquests. And all I have said may be summed up in the old motto '*Noblesse oblige.*'

"Now apply these principles to the policy of business. You will hear many men declare that craft is the element of success, that the way to push through the crowd is by dividing it to make room. My friend, these principles held good in the dark ages, when princes had to use rival forces to destroy each other; but in these days everything is open to the day and such a system would serve you very ill. You will always meet men face to face; either an honest gentleman or a treacherous foe, a man whose weapons are calumny, slander, and dishonesty. Well, understand that against him you have no better ally than himself; he is his own enemy; you can fight him with the weapons of loyalty; sooner or later he will be despised. As to the first, your own frankness will conciliate his esteem; and when your interests are reconciled—for everything can be arranged—he will be of service to you. Do not be afraid of making enemies; woe to him who has none in the world you will move in! But try never to give a handle to ridicule or discredit. I say *try*, for in Paris a man is not always free to act; he is liable to inevitable circumstances; you cannot escape mud from the gutter, nor a falling tile. There are gutters in the moral world, and those who fall try to splash nobler men with the mud in which they are drowning. But you can always command respect by showing yourself invariably relentless in your final decision.

"In this conflict of ambitions, and amid these tangled difficulties, always go straight to the point; resolutely attack the question, and never fight more than one point with all your strength. You know how Monsieur de Mortsauf hated Napoleon; he persistently cursed him, he watched him as the police watch a criminal, every evening he called out on him for the Duc d'Enghien's death—the only disaster, the only

death that ever wrung tears from him; well, he admired him as the boldest of leaders, and often expatiated on his tactics. Cannot a similar strategy be applied in the war of interests? It would economize time, as Napoleon's economized men and space. Think this over, for a woman is often mistaken about such things, judging only by feeling and instinct.

"On one point I may confidently insist: all trickery and craft is certain to be detected, and does harm in the end, whereas every crisis seems to me less perilous when a man takes his stand on plain-dealing. If I may quote myself as an example, I may tell you that at Clochegourde, forced by Monsieur de Mortsauf's temper to be on my guard against any litigation, and to have every question settled at once by arbitration, lest it should become a sort of illness to him which he would enjoy giving himself up to, I have always settled matters myself by going straight to the point and saying to my opponent, 'Untie the knot or cut it.'

"You will often find yourself of use to others, doing them some service, and getting small thanks; but do not imitate those who complain, and declare that they have met with nothing but ingratitude. Is not that putting one's self on a pedestal? And is it not rather silly to confess one's scant knowledge of the world? And do you do good as a usurer lends money? Will you not do it for its own sake? *Noblesse oblige!* At the same time, do not render men such service as compels them to be ungrateful, for then they will become your implacable enemies; there is a despair of obligation as there is a despair of ruin, which gives incalculable strength. On the other hand, accept as little as you can. Do not become the vassal of any living soul; depend on yourself alone.

"I can only advise, dear friend, as to the minor matters of life. In the political world everything has a different aspect, the rules that guide your personal conduct must bow to higher interests. But if you should reach the sphere in

which great men have their being, you, like God, will be sole judge of your decisions. You will be more than a man, you will be the embodiment of the law; you will be more than an individual, you will represent the nation incarnate. But though you will judge, you will also be judged. In later times you will be called to appear before the Ages, and you know history well enough to appreciate what the feelings and deeds are which lead to true greatness.

"I now come to the serious point—your conduct to women. In the drawing-rooms where you will visit make it a law to yourself never to squander yourself by indulging in the trivialities of flirtation. One of the men of the last century, who was in every way most successful, made it a practice never to devote himself but to one lady in an evening, and to select those who seemed forlorn. That man, my dear boy, was supreme in his day. He had shrewdly calculated that in due time he would be persistently praised by everybody. Most young men lose their most precious possession, the time, namely, which is needful for making the connections which are half of social life. While they are intrinsically attractive they would have little to do to attach others to their interests; but that springtime is brief—make the most of it. Cultivate the society of influential women. Influential women are old women; they will inform you as to the alliances and secrets of every family, and show you the cross-roads that may take you quickly to the goal. They will be really fond of you; patronage is their last passion when they are not bigots; they will be of invaluable service, they will speak well of you, and make other people want to know you.

"Avoid young women! Do not think that there is the least personal animus in this advice. The woman of fifty will do everything for you; the woman of twenty, nothing; she will demand your whole life; the elder woman will only ask for a moment, a little attention. Jest with young women,

take them very lightly, they are incapable of a serious thought. Young women, my dear, are selfish, petty, incapable of true friendship; they only love themselves and would sacrifice you for a success. Beside, they will require your full devotion, and your position will need the devotion of others—two irreconcilable propositions. No young woman will understand your interests; they will always be thinking of themselves, not of you, and do you more harm by their vanity than good by their attachment; they will unhesitatingly appropriate your time; they will mar your fortune and ruin you with the best grace in the world. If you complain, the silliest of them all can argue that her glove is worth the universe, that nothing can be more glorious than her service. They will all tell you that they can give you happiness and so make you forget your high destiny. The happiness they give is variable; your future greatness is certain.

"You do not know with what perfidious art they go about to gratify their caprices, to make a transient liking appear as a passion begun on earth to be eternal in heaven. When they throw you over, they will tell you that the words, 'I love you no longer,' justify their desertion, as the words, 'I love you,' justified their love—love that is irresponsible. My dear, the doctrine is absurd. Believe me, true love is eternal, infinite, always the same; equable and pure without vehement outbreaks; it is found under white hairs when the heart is still young. Nothing of the kind is to be found in women of fashion; they only act their part.

"This one will interest you by her sorrows, and seem the sweetest and least exacting of her sex; but when she has made herself necessary she will gradually domineer over you and make you do her bidding; you will wish to be a diplomatist, to go and come, to study men, interests, and foreign lands. No, you must stay in Paris or at her country-house, she will ingeniously tie you to her apron-string, and the more devoted you are the less grateful will she be. That one will try to

engage you by her submissiveness; she would be your page and follow you romantically to the ends of the earth; she would compromise herself for your sake—and hang like a stone around your neck. Thus one day you will be drowned, but she will come to the top.

"The least crafty of their sex have endless snares; the stupidest triumph by exciting no suspicions; the least dangerous of them all would be an audacious flirt who would fall in love with you, hardly knowing why, who would desert you without reason and take you up again out of vanity. But they will all do you a mischief sooner or later. Every young woman who goes into the world and lives on pleasure and the triumphs of vanity is half-corrupt and will corrupt you.

"That is not the chaste, meditative being in whose heart you may reign for ever. Nay, the woman who loves you will dwell in solitude, her highest festivals will be your looks, and she will feed on your words. Then let that woman be all the world to you, for you are all in all to her; love her truly, give her no pain, no rival, do not torture her jealousy. To be loved, my dear, and understood is the highest happiness—I only wish that you may know it; but do not compromise the first bloom of your soul; be very sure of the heart to which you give your affections. That woman must never be herself, never think of herself, but of you alone; she will never contradict you, she will not listen to her own interests; she will scent danger for you when you do not suspect it and forget her own; if she suffers, she will endure without complaining; she will have no personal vanity, but she will respect what you love in her. Return such love with even greater love. Love begets love.

"And if you should be so happy as to find, what your poor friend here can never have, an affection equally inspired and equally felt, however perfect that love may be, remember still that in a valley there lives for you a mother whose heart is so

deeply minded by the feeling with which you fill it that you can never reach the bottom of it.

"Yes, you can never know the extent of the affection I bear you: for it to show its full extent you would have had to be bereft of your noble intellect; you cannot think how far my devotion would have carried me then. Do you doubt me when I bid you avoid young women, who are all more or less superficial, sarcastic, vain, frivolous, and wasteful, and attach yourself to important dowagers, full of sense, as my aunt was, who will do you good service, who will defend you against secret calumny by quashing it, who will speak of you in terms you cannot use in speaking of yourself? After all, am I not generous when I bid you reserve your worship for the pure-hearted angel to come? If the words *Noblesse oblige* include a great part of my first injunctions, my advice as to your dealings with women may also be summed up in this chivalrous motto, '*Les servir toutes, n'en aimer qu'une*' (Serve all, love but one).

"Your learning is vast; your heart, preserved by suffering, is still unspotted, all is fair and good in you: then WILL! Your whole future lies in this one word, the watchword of great men. You will obey your Henriette, my child, will you not, and allow her still to tell you what she thinks of you and your doings in the world? I have a 'mind's eye' which can foresee the future for you, as for my children; then let me make use of the faculty for your benefit; it is a mysterious gift which has brought peace into my life; and which, far from waning, grows stronger in solitude and silence.

"In return, I ask you to give me a great joy; I want to see you growing great among men without having to frown over one of your successes; I want you very soon to raise your fortune to a level with your name, and to be able to tell me that I have contributed something more than a wish to your advancement. This secret coöperation is the only pleasure I can allow myself. I can wait.

"I do not say farewell. We are divided, you cannot press my hand to your lips; but you must surely have understood the place you fill in the heart of your

"HENRIETTE."

As I finished reading this letter, I seemed to feel a motherly heart throbbing beneath my fingers at the moment when I was still frozen by my mother's stern reception. I could guess why the Countess had forbidden me to read this letter so long as I was in Touraine; she had feared, no doubt, to see me fall with my head at her feet and to feel them wetted by my tears.

At last I made the acquaintance of my brother Charles, who had hitherto been a stranger to me; but he showed such arrogance in our most trifling intercourse as held us too far apart for us to care for each other as brothers. All kindly feeling is based on equality of mind and there was no point of contact between us. He lectured me solemnly on various trivial details which the mind or the heart knows by instinct; he always seemed distrustful of me; if my love had not been to me as a corner-stone, he might have made me awkward and stupid by seeming to think that I knew nothing. He, nevertheless, introduced me into society, where my rusticity was to be a foil to his accomplishment. But for the woes of my childhood, I might have taken his patronizing vanity for brotherly affection; but mental isolation produces the same effects as earthly solitude: the silence allows us to discern the faintest echo, and the habit of relying on one's self develops a sensitiveness so delicate that it vibrates to the lightest touch of the affections that concern us.

Before knowing Madame de Mortsauf a stern look hurt me, the tone of a rough word went to my heart; I groaned over it, though I knew nothing of the gentler life of caresses. Whereas, on my return from Clochegourde, I could draw comparisons which gave completeness to my premature knowl-

edge. Observation based on mere suffering is incomplete. Happiness has its lights too. But I allowed myself to be crushed under Charles' superiority as my elder, all the more readily because I was not his dupe.

I went alone to the Duchesse de Lenoncourt's house and heard no mention made of Henriette; no one but the good old Duke, who was simplicity itself, ever spoke of her; but, from the reception he gave me, I guessed that his daughter had secretly recommended me.

Hardly had I begun to get over the loutish surprise which a first sight of the great world produces in every tyro, when, just as I was getting a glimpse of the resources it has for ambitious men, and thinking of the joy of practicing Henriette's axioms, while recognizing their entire truth, the events of the twentieth of March supervened. My brother accompanied the court to Ghent, and I, by the Countess' advice—for I kept up a correspondence with her, frequent on my side only—I also went thither with the Duc de Lenoncourt. His habitual benevolence became a sincere desire to help me when he found that I was devoted head, heart, and hands to the Bourbons; he presented me to his majesty.

The courtiers of disaster are few. Youth has artless enthusiasms and disinterested fidelity; the King was a judge of men; what would have passed unnoticed at the Tuileries were conspicuous at Ghent, and I was so happy as to find favor with Louis XVIII.

A letter from Madame de Mortsauf to her father, brought with some dispatches by an emissary of the Vendéens, contained a scrap for me, informing me that Jacques was ill. Monsieur de Mortsauf, in despair alike at his son's frail health, and at a second emigration of the sovereign, in which he had no part, had added a few lines that enabled me to imagine my dear lady's situation. Fretted by him, no doubt, for spending all her time by Jacques' bedside, getting no rest day or night, scorning such vexations but incapable of controlling

herself when she was expending herself wholly in nursing her child, Henriette must be needing the support of a friendship that had made life less burdensome to her, if it were only by amusing Monsieur de Mortsauf. Several times already I had had the Count out for a walk when he was threatening to worry her—an innocent trick of which the success had earned me some of those looks expressing passionate gratitude, and in which love reads a promise. Though I was eager to follow in the footsteps of my brother Charles, recently sent to the congress at Vienna; though, at the risk of my life even, I longed to justify Henriette's predictions and free myself from being his vassal, my ambition, my desire for independence, my interests, which bid me remain with the King, all paled before Madame de Mortsauf's heart-stricken image. I decided on leaving the court at Ghent, and on going to serve my true sovereign.

God rewarded me. The messenger sent out by the Vendéens could not return to France; the King wanted a man who would devote himself to be the bearer of his instructions. The Duc de Lenoncourt knew that his majesty would not overlook the man who should undertake this perilous task; without consulting me, he obtained it for me, and I accepted it, only too glad to be able to return to Clochegourde while serving the good cause.

Thus, after having an audience of the King, at one-and-twenty, I returned to France, where, either in Paris or in la Vendée, I was to be so happy as to do his majesty's bidding. By the end of May, being the object of pursuit to the Bonapartists who were on my track, I was obliged to fly; affecting to make my way homeward, I went on foot from place to place, from wood to wood, across Upper Vendée, the Bocage, and Poitou, changing my route as circumstances required.

I thus reached Saumur; from Saumur I went to Chinon, and from Chinon, in a single night, I arrived in the woods of Neuil, where I met the Count, on horseback, on a common;

he took me up behind him and carried me home, without our meeting a soul who could recognize me.

"Jacques is better," was his first speech.

I explained to him my position as a diplomatic infantryman, hunted like a wild animal, and the gentleman rose up in him, in arms to dispute with Chessel the risk of harboring me.

When I saw Clochegourde I felt as if the past eight months were but a dream. The Count said to his wife as we entered, "Guess who is come with me! Félix."

"Is it possible?" she asked, her arms hanging limp, and looking quite amazed.

I came in; we stood, both immovable, she riveted to her seat, I on the threshold, gazing at each other with the fixed avidity of two lovers who want to make up in one look for lost time. But she, ashamed of her surprise, which laid her heart bare, arose, and I went forward.

"I have prayed much for you," said she, holding out her hand for me to kiss.

She asked for news of her father; then, understanding my fatigue, she went to arrange a room for me, while the Count had some food brought, for I was dying of hunger. My room was over hers, that which had been her aunt's; she left me to be taken to it by the Count, after setting foot on the bottom step of the stairs, considering no doubt whether she should show me the way herself; I turned around, she colored, wished me a sound nap, and hastily withdrew. When I came down to dinner I heard of the defeat at Waterloo, of Napoleon's flight, the march of the allies on Paris and the probable return of the Bourbons. To the Count these events were everything; to us they were nothing.

Do you know what the greatest news was after I had greeted the children, for I will say nothing of my alarm on seeing how pale and thin the Countess was? I knew the dismay I might produce by a gesture of surprise, and expressed

nothing but pleasure at seeing her. The great news for us was, "You will have some ice."

She had often been annoyed last year because she had no water cold enough for me; for, drinking nothing else, I liked it iced. God knows what it had cost her in importunities to have an ice-house built. You, better than any one, know that love is satisfied with a word, a look, a tone of voice, an attention apparently most trifling; its highest privilege is to be its own evidence. Well, this word, with her look and her pleasure, revealed to me the extent of her sentiments, as I had formerly shown her mine by my conduct over the backgammon.

But there was no end to the artless proofs of her tenderness. By the seventh day after my arrival she was quite herself again; she was sparkling with health, glee, and youth; I found my beloved lily more beautiful, more fully developed, just as I found all my heart's treasures increased. Is it not a narrow soul only, or a vulgar heart, which finds that absence diminishes feeling, effaces the impression of the soul, and deteriorates the beauty of the person beloved? To an ardent imagination, to those beings in whom enthusiasm flows in their blood, dying it with a fresher purple, and in whom passion takes on the form of constancy, has not absence such an effect as the torments which fortified the faith of early Christians and made God visible to them? Are there not, in a heart full of love, certain undying hopes which give a higher value to the image we desire by showing it in glimpses tinged by the glow of dreams? Can we not feel such promptings as lend the beauty of an ideal to those adored features by informing them with thought? The past, remembered bit by bit, is magnified; the future is furnished with hopes. Between two hearts overcharged with such electric tension, the first interview is then like a beneficent storm which revives the earth and fertilizes it, while shedding on it the flashing gleams of the lightning. How much exquisite pleasure I

tasted in finding that in us these thoughts, these experiences were reciprocal! With what rapture did I watch the growth of happiness in Henriette!

A woman who resuscitates under the eyes of the man she loves gives a greater proof of feeling perhaps than one who dies, killed by a suspicion, or withered on the stem for lack of nutrition. Which of the two is the more pathetic I cannot tell. Madame de Mortsauf's revival was as natural as the effect of the month of May on the meadows, or of sunshine and shower on drooping plants. Like our vale of love, Henriette had gone through her winter; like it, she was born anew with the spring.

Before dinner we went down to our beloved terrace. There, as she stroked the head of her poor child, weaker now than I had ever seen him, while he walked by her side in silence as though he were sickening for some disease, she told me of the nights she had spent by his sick-bed. For those three months, she said, she had lived exclusively in herself; she had dwelt, as it were, in a gloomy palace, dreading to enter the rooms where lights were blazing, where banquets were given that were forbidden to her; she had stood at the open door with one eye on her child and the other on a vague face, with one ear listening to sorrow and the other hearing a voice. She spoke in poems, suggested by solitude, such as no poet has ever written; and all quite simply, without knowing that there might be the slightest trace of love or taint of voluptuous thought, or of Oriental sweetness like a rose of Frangistan. When the Count joined us she went on in the same tone, as a wife proud of herself, who can look her husband boldly in the face and kiss her son's brow without a blush.

She had prayed much, holding her clasped hands over Jacques for whole nights, *willing* that he should not die.

"I went up to the gates of the sanctuary," she said, "to ask his life of God."

And she had seen visions; she repeated them to me; but when she presently said in her angel's voice these wonderful words, "When I slept, my heart kept watch!" "That is to say, you were almost crazy," said the Count, interrupting her.

She was silenced, as if this was the first blow she had ever had, as if she had forgotten that for thirteen years this man had never failed to aim an arrow at her heart. Like a glorious bird, she was stayed in her flight by this clumsy bullet; she fell into a mood of dull dejection.

"Dear me, monsieur," said she, after a pause, "will nothing I say ever find favor before the bar of your wit? Will you never have pity on my weakness, nor any sympathy with my womanly fancies?"

She paused. This angel already repented of having murmured, and sounded the past and the future alike at a glance. Could she be understood, had she not provoked some virulent retort? The blue veins throbbed strongly in her temples; she shed no tears, but her green eyes lost their color; then she looked down to the ground to avoid seeing in mine the exaggeration of her suffering, her own feelings guessed by me, her soul cherished in mine, and, above all, the sympathy, crimsoned by young love, that was ready, like a faithful dog, to fly at any one who should offend his mistress without measuring the force or the dignity of the foe. At such a moment the airs of superiority assumed by the Count were a thing to see; he fancied he had triumphed over his wife and battered her with a hailstorm of words, reiterating the same idea again and again, like the blows of an axe repeating the same sound.

"So he is the same as ever?" I asked when the Count left us, called away by the stableman who came to fetch him.

"Always!" replied Jacques.

"Always most kind, my boy," said she to Jacques, trying to screen Monsieur de Mortsauf from the criticism of his children. "You see the present, you know nothing of the

past; you cannot judge of your father without some injustice; and even if you were so unhappy as to see your father in the wrong, the honor of the family would require you to bury such secrets in the deepest silence."

"How are the improvements going on at la Cassine and la Rhétorière?" I inquired, to turn her mind from these bitter reflections.

"Beyond my hopes," she replied. "The buildings being finished, we found two capital farmers who took one at a rental of four thousand five hundred francs, we paying the taxes, and the other at five thousand; the leases for fifteen years. We have already planted three thousand young trees on the two new farms. Manette's cousin is delighted with la Rabelaye; Martineau has la Baude. The return on the four farms is chiefly in hay and wood, and they do not fatten the soil, as some dishonest farmers do, with the manure intended for the arable land. So our efforts are crowned with complete success. Clochegourde, apart from what we call the home farm, from our woods and the vineyards, brings in nineteen thousand francs, and the plantations will in time yield us an annuity. I am struggling now to get the home farm placed in the hands of our keeper, Martineau, whose place could be filled by his son. He offers a rental of three thousand francs if Monsieur de Mortsauf will only build him a house at la Commanderie. We could then clear the approach to Clochegourde, finish the proposed avenue to the Chinon road, and have nothing in our own hands but the wood and the vineyards. If the King returns, we shall have our pension again, and we shall accept it after a few days' contest with our wife's common sense! Thus Jacques' fortune will be perfectly secure. When we have achieved this result I shall leave it to monsieur to save for Madeleine, and the King will endow her, too, as is customary. My conscience is at peace, my task is nearly done. And you?" she asked.

I explained my mission and showed her how wise and

fruitful her advice had been. Had she been gifted with second sight to see events so accurately?

"Did I not say so in my letter?" replied she. "But it is only for you that I can exercise that strange faculty, of which I have spoken to no one but Monsieur de la Berge, my director; he explains it by divine intervention. Often, after any deep meditation to which my fears for the children have given rise, my eyes used to close to the things of this world and awake to another realm. When I saw Jacques and Madeleine as luminous figures, they were well for some little time; when I saw them wrapped in mist, they soon after fell ill. As for you, not only do I always see you radiant, but I hear a soft voice telling me what you ought to do—without words, by spiritual communication. By what law is it that I can use this marvelous faculty only for my children's behoof and yours?" she went on, becoming thoughtful. "Is it that God means to be a father to them?" she added, after a pause.

"Allow me to believe that I obey you alone," I earnestly answered.

She gave me one of those whole-hearted, gracious smiles which so intoxicated my soul that I should not in such a moment have felt a death-blow.

"As soon as the King reaches Paris, go there, leave Clochegourde," she said. "Degrading as it is to sue for place and favor, it is, on the other hand, ridiculous not to be at hand to accept them. There will be great changes. The King will need capable and trustworthy men; do not fail him. You will find yourself in office while still young, and you will benefit by it; for statesmen, as for actors, there is a certain routine of business which no genius can divine; it must be taught. My father learned that from the Duc de Choiseul. Think of me," she added, after a pause; "let me enjoy the pleasures of superiority in a soul that is all my own. Are you not my son?"

"Your son?" I said sullenly.

"Nothing but my son," said she, mimicking me. "And is not that a good enough place to hold in my heart?"

The bell rang for dinner, she took my arm, leaning on it with evident pleasure.

"You have grown," she said, as we went up the steps. When we reached the top she shook my arm as if my fixed gaze held her too eagerly; though her eyes were downcast she knew full well that I looked at her alone, and she said in her tone of affected impatience, so gracious and so insinuating—

"Come, let us look at our favorite valley."

She turned, holding her white silk parasol over our heads, and clasping Jacques closely to her side; the movement of her head, by which she directed my attention to the Indre, to the punt, and the fields, showed me that since my visit and our walks together she had made herself familiar with those misty distances and hazy curves. Nature was the cloak that had sheltered her thoughts; she knew now what the nightingale sobs over at night, and what the marsh-bird repeats in its plaintive, droning note.

At eight o'clock that evening I was present at a scene which touched me deeply, and which I had never before witnessed, because I had always remained to play with Monsieur de Mortsauf while she went into the dining-room before putting the children to bed. A bell rang twice and all the house-servants appeared.

"You are our guest; will you submit to convent rule?" she asked, leading me away by the hand with the look of innocent gaiety that is characteristic of all truly pious women.

The Count followed us. Masters, children, and servants, all knelt bareheaded in their accustomed places. It was Madeleine's turn to say prayers; the dear child did it in her thin, young voice, its artless tones clearly audible in the harmonious country silence, and giving each phrase the holy purity of innocence, that angelic grace. It was the most

touching prayer I ever heard. Nature whispered a response to the child's words in the myriad low rustlings of the evening hour, an accompaniment as of an organ softly played at the time of vespers.

Madeleine was on her mother's right hand, Jacques on the left. The pretty curly heads, and, rising between them, the mother's plaits of hair; above them, again, Monsieur de Mortsauf's perfectly white hair and ivory yellow skull, formed a picture of which the coloring seemed to repeat to the mind the idea suggested by the melody of prayer; and to fulfill the conditions of unity which stamp the sublime, the devout little assembly was wrapped in the subdued light of sunset, while the room was touched with the red beams. The poetical or the superstitious soul could thus imagine that the fires of heaven were shed on the faithful worshipers kneeling there before God without distinction of rank, all equals, as the church requires. My thoughts reverted to patriarchal times, and my fancy gave added dignity to the scene, itself so grand in its simplicity. The children bade their father good-night, the servants bowed, the Countess went away, each child holding a hand, and I went back to the drawing-room with the Count.

"You will have found salvation there and perdition here," said he, pointing to the backgammon board.

The Countess joined us in about half an hour, and brought her work-frame to the table.

"This is for you," said she, unrolling the canvas; "but the work has hung fire these three months past. Between that red carnation and that rose, my poor boy was very ill."

"Come, come," said Monsieur de Mortsauf; "do not talk about it. *Size-cinq*, master king's messenger."

When I went to my room, I sat motionless to hear her moving about below. Though she was calm and pure, I was tormented by crazy ideas and intolerable cravings.

"Why could she not be mine?" thought I. "Perhaps she, like me, is tossed on the whirlwind of the senses?"

At one o'clock I crept down the stairs, treading without a sound, and outside her door I lay down; with my ear to the crack I heard her soft and even breathing, like a child's. When I was quite chilled I went up again and to bed, where I slept quietly till morning.

To what predestination, to what taint of nature can I ascribe the pleasure I find in going to the edge of a precipice, in sounding the abyss of evil, in peering into its depths, shuddering at the chill, and drawing back in anguish. That hour at night spent on the threshold of her door, where I wept with frenzy, without her ever knowing on the morrow that she had trodden on my tears and my kisses—wept over her virtue, ruined and respected by turns, cursed and then worshiped—that hour, a madness in the eyes of many persons, was an inspiration of the same nameless feeling that carries on a soldier. Men have told me that in such a mood they have risked their life, rushing in front of a battery, to see whether they would escape the grapeshot, and whether they would not enjoy thus trying to leap the gulf of probabilities, like Jean Bart smoking while he sat on a powder barrel.

On the following day I went out and gathered two nosegays; the Count admired them—the Count, who cared for nothing of the kind, and for whom Champenetz's jest seemed to have been invented: "He builds dungeons in the air!"

I spent several days at Clochegourde, paying short calls only at Frapesle, where I dined, however, three times. The French army took up its quarters at Tours. Though I was evidently life and health to Madame de Mortsauf, she entreated me to get to Châteauroux and return as fast as possible to Paris through Issoudun and Orleans. I tried to rebel; she insisted, saying that her familiar had counseled her; I obeyed. Our parting this time was watered with tears; she

was afraid of the captivations of the world I was about to live in. Should I not have to enter seriously into the whirl of interests, of passions, of pleasures, which make Paris an ocean fraught with perils no less to chaste affections than to a clear conscience? I promised her that I would write her every evening the events and the thoughts of the day. At this promise she laid her weary head on my shoulder, and said—

"Omit nothing; everything will interest me."

She gave me letters to the Duke and Duchess, on whom I called the day after my arrival.

"You are in luck," said the Duke. "Dine here and come with me to the palace this evening; your fortune is made. The King mentioned your name this morning, adding, 'He is young, able, and faithful.' And the King regretted not knowing whether you were dead or alive, and whither the course of events had led you after you had so well fulfilled your mission."

That evening I was a master of appeals to the council of state, and was appointed to certain secret employment for the King—a confidential post which was to be permanent so long as he should reign, not splendid in appearance, but with no risk of overthrow, and which placed me at the heart of government, and was, in fact, the very foundation of all my prosperity.

Madame de Mortsauf had seen clearly, and I owed everything to her: power and wealth, happiness and knowledge; she guided and purified my heart, and gave my purpose that unity without which the powers of youth are vainly fritted away. At a later date I had a colleague. Each of us was on service for six months at a time. We could at need take each other's place; we had a room in the palace, a carriage at our command, and a handsome allowance for expenses when called upon to travel.

It was a strange position! We were the secret disciples of a monarch to whose policy his enemies have since done signal

justice; we heard his judgment on all matters internal and foreign; we had no acknowledged influence, but were occasionally consulted, as Laforêt was consulted by Molière, and we heard the hesitancy of long experience corrected by the conscience of youth.

Our prospects were indeed settled in a way to satisfy our ambition. Beside my pay as master of appeals, paid out of the revenue of the council of state, the King gave me a thousand francs a month out of the privy purse, and not unfrequently made me a present. Though the King knew full well that a young man of three-and-twenty could not long withstand the amount of work he piled upon me, my colleague, now a peer of France, was not appointed till the month of August, 1817. A choice was so difficult, our functions demanded such various qualities, that the King was long in coming to a decision. He did me the honor to ask me which of the young men among whom he was prepared to choose would best suit me as a companion. One of the number was a former comrade of mine at the Lepître boarding-house, and I did not name him.

The King asked me why, not understanding why I should pass him over.

"Your majesty," said I, "has mentioned men of equal loyalty, but of different degrees of ability. I have named the man I consider the most capable, feeling certain that we shall always agree."

My judgment coincided with the King's, who was always grateful for the sacrifice I had made. On this occasion he said to me, "You will be the first of the two." And he gave my colleague to understand this; still, in return for this service, my deputy became my friend.

The consideration with which I was treated by the Duc de Lenoncourt was the standard for that shown me by the rest of the world. The mere words—"The King is greatly interested in this young man; he has a future before him; the King likes him"—would have sufficed in lieu of talents; but they

also added to the kindness shown to a young official the indescribable tribute that is paid only to power.

Either at the Duc de Lenoncourt's or at my sister's house —married at about this time to our cousin the Marquis de Listomère, the son of the old aunt I had been wont to visit in the Ile Saint-Louis—I gradually made the acquaintance of the most influential persons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Henriette ere long threw me into the heart of the circle known as the "Petit-Château" (little castle), by the good offices of the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, whose grandniece she was by marriage. She wrote of me in such glowing terms that the Princess at once invited me to call on her. I was assiduous and was so happy as to please her; she became not my patroness, but a friend whose feelings were almost maternal. The old Princess set her heart on making me intimate with her daughter Madame d'Espard, with the Duchesse de Langeais, the Vicomtesse de Beauséant, and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse—women who, by turns, held the sceptre of fashion and who were all the more gracious to me because I made no claims upon them, and was always ready to be of service to them.

My brother Charles, far from ignoring me, thenceforth relied on my support; but my rapid success was the cause of some secret jealousy, which at a later period gave me much annoyance. My father and mother, amazed by such unexpected good fortune, felt their vanity flattered and at last recognized me as their son; but as the sentiment was to some extent artificial, not to say acted, this revulsion had not much effect on my ulcerated heart. Beside, affection that is tainted with selfishness excites little sympathy; the heart abhors every form of calculation and profit.

I wrote regularly to my dear Henriette, who answered me in a letter or two each month. Thus her spirit hovered over me, her thoughts traversed space and kept a pure atmosphere about me. No woman could attract me. The King knew of

my reserve; in such matters he was of the school of Louis XV., and used to laugh and call me "Mademoiselle de Vandenesse," but the propriety of my conduct was very much approved by him. I am quite sure that the patience which had become a habit during my childhood, and yet more at Clochegourde, did much to win me the King's good graces; he was always most kind to me. He no doubt indulged a fancy for reading my letters, for he was not long under any mistake as to my blameless life. One day when the Duke was in attendance I was writing from the King's dictation, and he, seeing the Duke come in, looked mischievously at us both.

"Well, that confounded fellow Mortsauf still persists in living on?" said he, in his fine ringing voice, to which he could at will give a tone of biting sarcasm.

"Yes, still," replied the Duke.

"But the Countess de Mortsauf is an angel whom I should very much like to see here," the King went on. "However, I can do nothing; but perhaps my secretary," and he turned to me, "may be more fortunate. You have six months' leave. I shall engage as your colleague the young man of whom we were speaking yesterday. Enjoy yourself at Clochegourde, Master Cato!" and he smiled as he was wheeled out of the room in his chair.

I flew like a swallow to Touraine. For the first time I was about to show myself to the woman I loved, not only as rather less of a simpleton, but in the paraphernalia of a young man of fashion whose manners had been formed in the politest circles, whose education had been finished by the most charming women, who had at last won the reward of his sufferings, and who had made good use of the experience of the fairest angel to whom heaven ever intrusted the care of a child.

When I had stayed at Clochegourde at the time of my mission in la Vendée, I had been in shooting dress; I wore a jacket with tarnished white metal buttons, finely striped

trousers, leather gaiters, and shoes. My long tramp and the thickets had served me so ill that the Count was obliged to lend me some linen. This time, two years' residence in Paris, the duty of attending the King, the habits of wealth, my now complete development, and a youthful countenance which beamed with indescribable light, derived from the serenity of a soul magnetically united to the pure soul at Clochegourde that went forth to me—all had transfigured me; I was sure of myself without being conceited; I was deeply satisfied at finding myself, young as I was, at the top of the tree; I had the proud consciousness of being the secret mainstay of the most adorable woman on earth, and her unconfessed hope.

I felt perhaps some stirrings of vanity when the postillion's whip cracked in the newly-made avenue from the Chinon road to Clochegourde, and a gate, I had never seen, opened in an enclosing wall that had been recently built. I had not written to announce my arrival to the Countess, wishing to take her by surprise; but this was a twofold blunder: in the first place, she suffered the shock of a pleasure long wished for, but regarded as impossible, and she also proved to me that elaborate surprises are always in bad taste.

When Henriette beheld a young man where she had remembered a boy, her eyes fell with a tragical droop; she allowed me to take her hand and kiss it without showing any of the heartfelt pleasure which I had been wont to perceive in her sensitive thrill; and when she raised her face to look at me again, I saw that she was pale.

"So you do not forget old friends!" said Monsieur de Mortsauf, who had neither altered nor grown older.

The two children sprang into my arms; I saw in the doorway the grave face of the Abbé de Dominis, Jacques' tutor.

"No," said I to the Count, "and henceforth I shall have six months of every year to devote always to you. Why, what is the matter?" I said to the Countess, putting my arm

around her waist to support her, in the presence of all her family.

"Oh! leave me!" she exclaimed with a start; "it is nothing."

I read her soul, and answered her secret thought; I said to her, "Do you no longer acknowledge me for your faithful slave?"

She took my arm, turned away from the Count, the children, the abbé, and all the servants who had hurried out, and led me round the lawn, still within sight of them all. When we had gone so far that she thought she could not be heard—

"Felix, my friend," she said, "forgive the alarms of a woman who has but one clue by which to guide herself in an underground labyrinth, and fears to find it broken. Tell me once more that I am more than ever your Henriette, that you will not desert me, that nothing can dislodge me, that you will always be my faithful friend. I have had a sudden vision of the future—and you were not there as usual, with a radiant face and your eloquent eyes fixed on mine; you had your back to me."

"Henriette, dear idol, whom I worship more than I do God; lily, flower of my life, how can you, who are my conscience, fail to know that I am so entirely part of your heart, that my soul is here when my body is in Paris? Need I tell you that I have traveled hither in seventeen hours; that every turn of the wheel bore with it a world of thought and longing, which broke out like a tempest the moment I saw you——"

"Tell me, tell me! I am sure of myself. I can listen to you without sinning. God does not desire my death; He sends you to me as He gives the breath of life to His creatures, as He sheds rain from the clouds on a barren land. Speak, tell me, do you love me with a holy love?"

"With a holy love."

"And for ever?"

"For ever."

"As a Virgin Mary, to be left shrouded in her draperies under her spotless crown?"

"As a visible Virgin."

"As a sister?"

"As a sister too dearly loved."

"As a mother?"

"As a mother I secretly long for."

"Chivalrously, without hope?"

"Chivalrously, but hoping."

"In short, as if you were still but twenty, and had your shabby, blue evening-coat?"

"Oh, far better! I love you like that, but I also love you as——" She looked at me in keen alarm. "As you loved your aunt."

"Ah! I am happy; you have relieved my fears," said she, going to the others, who were puzzled by our private colloquy.

"Be still a child here! for you are but a child. If your best policy is to be a man to the King, understand that here it is to be a boy. As a boy you will be loved. I shall always resist the powers of the man, but what can I deny a child? Nothing; he can ask nothing that I would not grant. We have told all our secrets," she added, looking at the Count with a saucy smile, in which I saw her a girl again in all her simple nature. "I am now going in to dress."

Never for three years had I known her voice so thoroughly happy. It was the first time I heard those swallow-like notes, that childlike tone of which I have spoken.

I had brought a sportsman's outfit for Jacques and a workbox for Madeleine—which her mother always used; in short, I had made up for the shabbiness to which I had hitherto been condemned by my mother's parsimony. The delight of the two children as they displayed their presents to each other seemed to annoy the Count, who was always aggrieved if he was not the centre of attentions. I gave Madeleine a look of intelligence and followed the Count, who wanted to

talk about himself. He led me to the terrace; but we paused on the steps at each solemn fact he impressed upon me.

"My poor, dear Félix," said he, "you find them all happy and in good health. It is I who give shadow to the picture. I have absorbed their maladies, and I can bless God for having inflicted them on me. I used not to know what ailed me; but I know now—I have a disease of the pylorus; I can digest nothing."

"By what good luck have you become as learned as a professor of the College of Physicians?" said I, smiling. "Is your doctor so indiscreet as to tell you this?"

"Heaven preserve me from consulting doctors!" he exclaimed, with the look of repugnance that most imaginary invalids show at the thought of medical treatment.

Then I had to listen to a crazy harangue, in the course of which he was ridiculously confidential, complaining of his wife, his servants, his children, and his life, taking evident delight in repeating his remarks of every day to a friend who, not knowing them, might be startled by them and who was obliged by politeness to seem interested. He must have been satisfied, for I listened with deep attention, trying to formulate this inconceivable character, and to guess what new torments he was inflicting on his wife, though she had not said so.

Henriette herself put an end to the monologue by coming out on the steps. The Count saw her, shook his head, and added—

"You, Félix, listen to me; but no one here has any pity for me."

And he went away as though aware that he would be in the way during my conversation with Henriette, or perhaps as a chivalrous attention to her, knowing that he would give her pleasure by leaving us together. His character was full of really inexplicable contradictions, for he was jealous, as all weak persons are; but his confidence in his wife's saintliness knew no bounds; perhaps it was the irritation to his vanity

caused by the superiority of her lofty virtue that gave rise to his constant antagonism to the Countess' wishes, whom he loved to defy as children defy their mother and their masters. Jacques was at his lessons, Madeleine was dressing; thus I had an hour to walk alone with the Countess on the terrace.

"Well, dear angel," I asked, "so the chain is heavier than ever, the sands more scorching, the thorns more thickly set?"

"Be silent," said she, guessing what thoughts had been suggested to me by the Count's conversation. "You are here and all is forgotten! I am not, I have not been unhappy."

She danced a few light steps as if to flutter her white dress, to let the breezes play with her frills of snowy tulle, her loose sleeves, her bright ribbons, her cape, and the airy curls of her hair dressed *à la Sévigné;* I saw her for the first time really girlish and young, naturally gay, and as ready for sport as a child. I experienced both the tears of happiness and the delight a man feels in giving pleasure.

"Sweet flower of humanity," cried I, "that my fancy caresses and my spirit kisses! Oh my lily! still intact and erect on its stem, still white, proud, fragrant, and alone!"

"That is enough, monsieur," she said, with a smile. "Talk to me about yourself, and tell me everything."

And then, under the moving canopy of quivering leaves, we had a long conversation, full of endless parentheses, each subject dropped and taken up again, in which I initiated her into my whole life and all my occupations. I described my rooms in Paris, for she wanted to know everything, and I—joy then not fully appreciated!—I had nothing to conceal. As she thus read all my soul, and learned all the details of my life full of overwhelming toil, as she discerned the importance of my functions, in which, but for the strictest honesty, it would be so easy to cheat and grow rich, and which I exercised with such fidelity that the King, as I told her, nicknamed me Mademoiselle de Vandenesse, she clasped my hand and kissed it, leaving on it a tear of joy. This sudden

inversion of our parts, this splendid praise, the swiftly expressed feeling, even more swiftly understood. "You are indeed the master I could have obeyed, the fulfillment of my dream!"—all the avowal expressed in this action, whose very humility was dignity, betraying love in a sphere far above the senses; this whirl of heavenly emotions fell on my heart and crushed me. I felt so small! I wished I could die at her feet.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "you women will always outdo us in every way. How could you doubt me?—for you did doubt me just now, Henriette."

"Not in the present," she replied, looking at me with the ineffable sweetness that softened the light in her eyes for me alone. "But seeing you so handsome, I said to myself: Our plans for Madeleine will be marred by some woman who will guess what treasures lie below, who will worship you, rob us of our Félix, and destroy everything for us."

"Still Madeleine!" said I, with an expression of surprise which only half-distressed her. "Is it to Madeleine that I remain faithful?"

We then sat in silence, very provokingly interrupted by Monsieur de Mortsauf. My heart was full, but I had to keep up a conversation beset with difficulties, in which my truthful replies as to the policy then carried out by the King offended the Count's views, while he insisted on my explaining his majesty's intentions. Notwithstanding my questions as to his horses, the state of agriculture, whether he was satisfied with his five farms, if he meant to fell the trees in the old avenue, he constantly came back to politics with the petulance of an old maid and the pertinacity of a child; for minds of this type always eagerly turn to the side where light shines, they blunder up to it again and again, buzzing round but getting no nearer, exhausting one's spirit as bluebottle flies weary the ear by humming against the window-pane.

Henriette said nothing. I, to put an end to a dialogue which the warmth of youth might have heated to a flame, re-

plied in assenting monosyllables, thus avoiding a useless discussion; but Monsieur de Mortsauf was far too clear-sighted not to discern the offensive side of my politeness. Presently he turned restive, vexed at being constantly agreed with; his eyebrows and the wrinkles in his forehead twitched, his tawny eyes flashed, his bloodshot nose turned redder than ever, as on that day when, for the first time, I witnessed one of his fits of frenzy. Henriette gave me a beseeching look to convey to me that she could not exert on my behalf the firmness she employed in justifying or defending the children.

I then answered the Count, taking him seriously, and managing him with the greatest skill.

"Poor dear! poor dear!" she said, murmuring the words again and again; they fell on my ear like a breath of air. Then, when she thought she could interfere with some success, she exclaimed, interrupting us—

"Do you know, gentlemen, that you are desperately unamusing?"

Recalled by this remark to the chivalrous deference due to a woman, the Count ceased discussing politics; it was now his turn to be bored as we talked of trifles, and he left us free to walk together, saying that perpetually pacing up and down on the same spot made him giddy.

My gloomy conjectures were accurate. The fair scenery, the mild atmosphere, the clear sky, the exquisite poetry of this valley, which for fifteen years had soothed the acutest vagaries of this sick brain, had now lost their power. At an age when in most men the rough edges wear down and the angles rub smooth, this old gentleman's temper was more aggressive than ever. For some months now he had been contradictory for contradiction's sake, without reason, without justifying his opinions; he asked the wherefore of everything, fussed over a delay or a message, interfered incessantly in domestic matters, and demanded an account of the smallest details of the household, till he wore out his wife and his

servants, leaving them no freedom of action. Formerly he had not given way to his temper without some plausible reason, now his fractiousness was incessant. The care of his money and the anxieties of husbandry, with the stir of a busy life, had perhaps diverted his atrabilious humor by giving his anxious spirit something to work on, and employing his active mind; perhaps it was want of occupation that now left his disorder to react upon itself; having nothing outside him to fret it, it took the form of fixed ideas; the physical individual had become the victim of the moral individual.

He was now his own doctor. He compared medical works, and believed he had all the complaints of which he read the descriptions; then he took the most elaborate precautions to guard his health; always something new, impossible to foresee, more impossible to satisfy. At one time he would have no noise; and when the Countess had succeeded in establishing total silence he would suddenly complain of living in a tomb, and say that there was a medium between making no noise and the muteness of La Trappe. Sometimes he affected absolute indifference to all earthly things; then the whole house breathed again: the children could play, the work of the household was carried on without any fault-finding; suddenly, in the midst of it all, he would cry out piteously, "You want to kill me! My dear, if it concerned the children, you would know by instinct what annoyed them!" he would say to his wife, adding to the injustice of the words by the hard, cold tone in which he spoke them. Then he was for ever dressing and undressing, studying the least variations of temperature, and never doing anything without consulting the barometer. In spite of his wife's motherly care, he never found any food to his liking, for he declared that his stomach was always out of order, and that painful digestion hindered his sleeping; at the same time, he ate, drank, digested and slept in a way that the most learned physician might have admired. His endless caprices wore out the household; like all servants, they were the

slaves of routine, and incapable of accommodating themselves to the exigencies of constantly varying orders. The Count would desire that all the windows were to be left open, as fresh air was indispensable to his health; a few days later the air was too damp, or too hot, he could not endure it; he scolded, he quarreled over it, and, to be in the right, would deny his previous order. This lack of memory, or of honesty, of course gave him the victory in every discussion when his wife tried to prove that he contradicted himself.

A residence at Clochegourde was so unendurable that the Abbé de Dominis, an exceedingly learned man, had fallen back on the solution of certain problems and intrenched himself in affected absence of mind. The Countess no longer hoped to be able to keep the secret of his fits of mad fury within the family circle, as of old. The servants had already witnessed many scenes when the prematurely old man's unreasoning rage passed all bounds; they were so much attached to the Countess that nothing was ever repeated, but she lived in daily terror of some outburst in public of a frenzy which no respect of persons could now control. At a later time I heard terrible details of the Count's behavior to his wife; instead of being a help to her he overwhelmed her with gloomy predictions, making her responsible for future ills because she refused to follow the insane medical treatment he wished to inflict on the children. If the Countess went out walking with Jacques and Madeleine, her husband would prophesy of coming storms in spite of a clear sky; then, if by chance his prediction was justified by the event, his conceit was so much gratified as to be indifferent to the harm done to his children. If one of them fell ill, the Count exercised his wit in finding a cause for the attack in the system of nursing adopted by his wife, which he would dispute in its minutest details, always ending with these brutal words, "If your children are ill again, it is all your own doing!"

He carried this system into the smallest points of domestic

management, in which he always saw the worst side of things, and made himself "the devil's advocate," to quote his old coachman's expression. The Countess had arranged that Jacques and Madeleine should have their meals at a different hour from their parents, and had thus preserved them from the dreadful effects of the Count's malady, meeting every storm as it broke. The children rarely saw their father.

By an illusion peculiar to selfish people, the Count had no suspicion of the mischief he caused. In his confidential conversation with me he had, indeed, blamed himself for too great leniency to his family. Thus he wielded the knout, felling and destroying everything about him as a monkey might have done, and after wounding his victim denied that he had ever touched her. I understood now what had drawn the lines, as fine as razor-cuts, across the Countess' brow; I had noticed them as soon as I saw her. There is a sort of modesty in noble souls that keeps them from uttering their sorrows; they hide their griefs from those they love, out of pride and a feeling of luxurious charity. And in spite of my urgency, I did not at once extract this confession from Henriette. She feared to distress me; she let things out, bit by bit, with sudden blushes; but I was not slow to guess the aggravated bitterness that her husband's want of occupation had infused into the domestic miseries of Clochegourde.

"Henriette," said I a few days later, showing her that I had sounded the depths of her new griefs, "did you not make a mistake when you planned your estate so completely as to leave the Count nothing to employ him?"

"Nay, dear," she said with a smile, "my position is so critical as to need all my attention; believe me, I have studied every alternative—they are all exhausted. It is true, worries increase every day. As Monsieur de Mortsauf and I are always together, I cannot diminish them by distributing them to several points; everything must bring the same suffering on me. I had thoughts of amusing Monsieur de Mortsauf by

advising him to introduce the culture of silk-worms at Clochegourde; there are some mulberry trees here already, survivors from that industry, once known in Touraine; but I understood that he would be none the less tyrannical at home, that all the thousand troubles of the undertaking would fall upon me.

"You see, my observing friend," she went on, "while a man is young his bad qualities are controlled by the outer world, impeded in their rise by the other passions, checked by respect of persons; but later, in retirement, as a man grows old, little faults come forth, all the more terrible because they have so long been kept under. Human weakness is essentially cowardly; it grants neither peace nor truce; what has once been surrendered yesterday it insists on to-day, to-morrow, and for ever after; it takes possession of all that is conceded and demands more. Strength is merciful; it yields to conviction; it is just and peaceable, while the passions that are born of weakness are pitiless. They are never satisfied but when they can behave like children, who like stolen fruit better than what they may eat at table. Monsieur de Mortsauf takes a real pleasure in stealing a march on me; he who would never deceive anybody loves to deceive me so long as the trick remains unknown."

One morning, about a month after my arrival, as we came out from breakfast, the Countess took my arm, hurried out by a railed gate that opened into the orchard, and dragged me away to the vineyard.

"Oh! he will kill me!" she cried. "And yet I must live, if only for the children's sake! Can I not have a single day's respite? Must I always be stumbling over brambles, expecting every moment to fall, compelled every moment to summon all my strength to keep my balance! No living creature can endure such an expenditure of energy. If only I knew the ground I should be called upon to struggle over,

if my endurance were a fixed quantity, my spirit would bend to it; but no, the attack comes every day in a new form and finds me defenseless; my trouble is not single, but manifold. Félix, Félix, you could never imagine the odious aspect his tyranny has assumed, or the odious measures suggested to him by his medical books. Ah! my friend——" she leaned her head on my shoulder without finishing her sentence. "What is to become of me; what can I do?" she went on, fighting with the ideas she had not uttered. "How can I contend with him? He will kill me. No, I will kill myself —only that is a crime! Can I fly? There are the children! Demand a separation? But how, after fifteen years of married life, am I to tell my father that I cannot live with Monsieur de Mortsauf when, if my father or my mother were to come here, he would be calm, well-conducted, polite, and witty. And, beside, has a married woman a father and a mother? She belongs, body and soul, to her husband. I used to live in peace; if not happy, I found some strength in my chaste isolation. I confess it, if I am bereft of that negative comfort, I, too, shall go mad! My objection is founded on reasons not personal to myself. Is it not wicked to bring poor little creatures into the world, who are doomed from birth to constant suffering? At the same time, this question of conduct is so serious that I cannot solve it unaided: I am judge and party to the suit. I will go to Tours to-morrow and consult the Abbé Birotteau, my new director — for my dear and worthy Abbé de la Berge is dead," she said in a parenthesis. "Though he was stern, I shall always miss his apostolic firmness; his successor is an angel of mildness who is too easily touched to reprimand me. However, what courage can fail to find refreshment in religion? What reason but will gain strength from the voice of the Holy Ghost?

"Dear God!" she exclaimed, drying her tears and looking up to heaven, "for what am I thus punished? But we must believe—yes, Félix," she said, laying her hand on my arm,

"let us believe that we must pass through a red-hot crucible before we can mount holy and perfect to the higher spheres. Ought I to be silent? Does God forbid my crying out to a friend's heart. Do I love him too well?" She clasped me to her as though she feared to lose me. "Who will answer my doubts? My conscience does not reproach me. The stars above shine down on men; why, then, should not the soul, that living star, shed its fires over and round a friend when only pure thoughts go out to him?"

I listened in silence to this terrible outcry, holding her clammy hand in my own, which was moister still; I grasped it with a force to which my Henriette responded with equal pressure.

"You are there, are you?" exclaimed the Count, coming toward us bareheaded.

Since my return he had insisted on always being the third whenever we met, either because he counted on some amusement, or because he suspected the Countess of telling me of all her sorrows and bewailing herself to me; or, again, because, perhaps, he was morbidly jealous of a pleasure he did not share.

"How he follows me about!" said she in a tone of despair. "We will go to look at the *clos* (field), and then we shall avoid him. Stoop low behind the hedges and we shall escape." We screened ourselves behind a thick hedge, and reaching the vineyard at a run, found ourselves far enough from the Count under an alley of almond trees.

"Dear Henriette," said I, holding her arm pressed against my heart, and standing still to contemplate her in her sorrow, "you could once steer me wisely through the perilous ways of the great world. Allow me now to give you some instructions to help you to end the single-handed duel in which you must infallibly be defeated, for you and he are not fighting with equal weapons. Cease, struggle no longer against a madman——"

"Hush!" she exclaimed, keeping back the tears that filled her eyes.

"Listen to me, my dearest. After an hour of his talk, which I endure for your sake, my mind is often bewildered and my head aches; the Count makes me doubt my very senses; the same things repeated are stamped in my brain in spite of myself. A strongly marked monomania is not infectious; when madness takes the form of affecting a man's views and hides itself behind perpetual discussions, it may act terribly on those who live with it. Your patience is sublime, but is it not stultifying? For your own sake, for your children's, change your system with the Count. Your exquisite submissiveness has increased his egoism; you treat him as a mother treats the child she spoils. But now, if you wish to live—and you do," I added, looking her in the face, "exert all the influence you have over him. He loves and he fears you—you know it; make him fear you more; meet his diffused willfulness with a narrow, set will. Increase your power, just as he has managed to increase the concessions you have granted; imprison his infirmities in a narrow moral sphere, as a maniac is imprisoned in a cell."

"Dear boy," said she, smiling bitterly, "none but a heartless woman could play such a part. I am a mother; I should make a feeble executioner. I can suffer—yes; but to make others suffer!—Never," she said, "not even to attain some great or conspicuous advantage. Should I not have to falsify my feelings, disguise my voice, set my face, restrain every gesture? Do not require such lies of me. I can stand between Monsieur de Mortsauf and his children; I can take his blows so that they may fall on no one else; that is the utmost I can do to reconcile so many antagonistic interests."

"Let me worship you! Saint, thrice saintly!" I exclaimed, kneeling on one knee, kissing her dress, and wiping on it the tears that rose to my eyes. "But if he should kill you!" said I.

She shuddered, turned pale, and raising her moisture-laden eyes to heaven—

"God's will be done," she replied.

"Do you know what the King said to your father when speaking of you: 'That old wretch of a Mortsauf still lives on?'"

"What is a jest on the King's lips is a crime here," she replied.

In spite of our precautions, the Count had tracked us; bathed in sweat, he came up with us under a walnut tree, where the Countess had paused to speak these grave words. As soon as I saw him, I began to discuss the vintage. Had he any unjust suspicions? I know not, but he stood looking at us without saying a word, or heeding the damp chill that falls from a walnut tree.

After a few minutes, during which he spoke in broken sentences of little or no meaning, with pauses of very great significance, the Count said he had a sick headache; he complained of it mildly, not claiming our pity nor describing his indisposition in exaggerated terms. We paid no heed to him. When we went in he felt still worse, talked of going to bed, and did so without ceremony, with a simplicity that was very unusual. We took advantage of the armistice granted to us by his fit of hypochondria and went down to our beloved terrace, taking Madeleine with us.

"Let us go out on the river," said the Countess after a few turns, "we will go to see the fish caught by the gamekeeper for to-day's supply."

We went out of the little gate, found the punt, got into it, and slowly pushed up stream. Like three children, delighted with trifles, we looked at the flowers on the banks, at the blue and green dragon-flies, and the Countess wondered that she could enjoy such tranquil pleasures in the midst of so much acute grief. But does not the calm influence of nature moving on, indifferent to our struggles, exert a consoling

charm? The swirl of passion, with its suppressed longings, harmonizes with that of the river; the flowers, unforced by the hand of man, express his most secret dreams; the delicious see-saw of a boat vaguely repeats the thoughts that float in the brain.

We felt the lulling influence of this twofold poetry. Our words, strung to the diapason of nature, were full of mysterious grace, and our eyes shone with brighter beams, as they caught the light so lavishly shed by the sun on the scorching shore. The river was like a road on which we flew. In short, disengaged from the mechanical movement exerted in walking, the mind took possession of creation. And was not the excited glee of the little girl in her freedom—so pretty in her movements, so puzzling in her remarks—the living expression of two souls set free, and indulging in the ideal creation of the being dreamed of by Plato, and known to all whose youth has been filled with happy love?

To give you an idea of that hour, not in its indescribable details, but as a whole, I may say that we loved each other in every creature, in every object that we saw about us; we felt outside us the happiness each longed for; it sank so deeply into our hearts that the Countess drew off her gloves and let her beautiful hands play in the water, as if to cool some secret fires. Her eyes spoke; but her lips, parted like a rose to the air, would have closed on a desire. You know the harmony of deep notes in perfect concord with a high treble; it always reminds me of the harmony of our two souls that day, never more to be repeated.

"Where do your men fish," I asked, "if you can only fish from your own banks?"

"Near the bridge at Ruan," said she. "The river is ours now from the bridge at Ruan down to Clochegourde. Monsieur de Mortsauf has just bought forty acres of meadow with the savings of the last two years and the arrears of his pension. Does that surprise you?"

"I? I only wish that the whole valley was yours!" I exclaimed, and she answered with a smile.

We were presently above Pont de Ruan, at a spot where the Indre widens and where the men were fishing.

"Well, Martineau?" said she.

"Oh, Madame la Comtesse, luck is against us. We have been out three hours, working up from the mill, and we have caught nothing."

We landed to help draw the net once more, standing, all three of us, in the shade of a poplar, with silvery bark, of a kind common on the Danube and the Loire, which in spring-time sheds a silky white fluff, the wrapper of its catkins. The Countess had resumed her serene dignity; she repented of having confessed her pangs to me, and of crying out like Job instead of weeping like a Magdalen—a Magdalen bereft of lovers, of feasts and dissipations, but not without perfume and beauty.

The net was drawn at her feet, full of fish—tench, barbel, pike, perch, and an enormous carp leaped upon the grass.

"They were sent on purpose!" said the keeper.

The laborers stared open-eyed with admiration of the woman standing like a fairy who had touched the net with her wand.

At this moment a groom appeared, riding at a gallop across the fields, and filling her with qualms of horror. Jacques was not with us; and a mother's first instinct, as Virgil has so poetically expressed it, is to clasp her children to her bosom on the slightest alarm.

"Jacques!" she cried. "Where is Jacques? What has happened to my boy?"

She did not love me; if she had loved me, for my sufferings too, she would not have uttered this cry as of a lioness in despair.

"Madame la Comtesse, Monsieur le Comte is much worse."

She drew a breath of relief, and ran off with me, followed by Madeleine.

"Come after me slowly," said she, "that the dear child may not overheat herself. You see, Monsieur de Mortsauf's walk in this heat had put him into a perspiration, and standing in the shade of the walnut trees may bring misfortune on us."

The words revealed her purity of mind. The Count's death a misfortune!

She hurried on to Clochegourde, went in by a break in the wall and crossed the vineyard. I returned as slowly as she could wish. Henriette's words had enlightened me, but as the lightning-flash which destroys the garnered harvest. During that hour on the river I had fancied that she cared most for me; I now felt bitterly that her words were perfectly sincere. The lover who is not all in all is nothing. So I was alone in my love with the longing of a passion that knows all its wants, that feeds on anticipation, on hoped-for kindness, and is satisfied with the joys of imagination, because it confounds with them those it looks for in the future. If Henriette loved me, she still knew nothing of the joys or the storms of love. She lived on the feeling itself, as a saint is the spouse of God.

I was the object with which her thoughts were bound up, the sensations she misunderstood, as a swarm of bees clings to some blossoming bough; but I was not the element of life to her, only an adventitious fact. A king unthroned, I walked on, wondering who should restore me to my kingdom. In my crazy jealousy I blamed myself for never having greatly dared, for not having tightened the bonds of an affection—which now seemed to me refined out of all reality—by the chains of self-evident right conferred by possession.

The Count's indisposition, caused probably by a chill under the walnut tree, in a few hours had become serious. I went off to Tours to fetch a physician of note, Monsieur Origet, whom I could not bring back till the evening; but he spent the night and the next day at Clochegourde. Though he had

sent the groom to fetch a large number of leeches, he thought immediate bleeding necessary and had no lancet with him. I rushed off to Azay, in dreadful weather; I roused Monsieur Deslandes the surgeon, and made him come off with the rapidity of a bird. Ten minutes later the Count would have succumbed; bleeding saved him.

In spite of this first triumph the doctor pronounced him in a dangerously high fever, one of those attacks which come on people who have ailed nothing for over twenty years. The Countess was overwhelmed; she believed herself to be the cause of this disastrous illness. Unable to thank me for what I did she was content to give me an occasional smile, with an expression that was equivalent to the kiss she had pressed on my hand; I wished I could read in it the remorse of an illicit passion; but it was an act of contrition, painful to see in so pure a soul, and the expression of admiring affection for him whom she considered noble, while she accused herself alone of an imaginary crime. She loved indeed as Laura de Noves loved Petrarch, and not as Francesca da Rimini loved Paolo —a crushing discovery for a man who had dreamed of the union of these two types of love. The Countess was reclining, her frame exhausted, her arms lying limp, in a dirty armchair in Count Mortsauf's room—a place that reminded me of a wild boar's den.

Next evening, before leaving, the doctor told the Countess, who had watched all night, that she must send for a nurse; the illness would be long.

"A nurse!" she exclaimed. "No, no. We will nurse him," she added, looking at me. "We owe it to ourselves to save him."

At these words, the doctor glanced at us with an observing eye full of astonishment. The expression of her words was enough to lead him to suspect some crime that had failed in the execution. He promised to come twice a week, suggested the treatment to be pursued by Monsieur Deslandes, and de-

scribed the alarming symptoms which might necessitate his being fetched from Tours.

To secure the Countess at least one night's rest out of two, I proposed that she should allow me to sit up with the Count in turns with her; and thus, not without difficulty, I persuaded her to go to bed the third night. When all was still in the house, during a minute when the Count was dozing, I heard a sigh of anguish from Henriette's room. My anxiety was so keen that I went to see her; she was on her knees before her *prie-Dieu* (kneeling bench) in tears and accusing herself: "Ah, God! if this is the price of a murmur," she cried, "I will never complain again."

"You have left him!" she exclaimed as she saw me.

"I heard you wailing and moaning, and I was alarmed about you."

"About me? Oh, I am quite well," she said.

She wanted to be sure that Monsieur de Mortsauf was really asleep. We went down together, and by the light of a lamp we looked at him. He was weakened by loss of blood rather than sleeping; his restless hands were trying to pull the counterpane up.

"They say that is a trick of the dying," said she. "Oh, if he were to die of this illness brought on by us, I would never marry again; I swear it!" she went on, solemnly holding out her hand over the Count's head.

"I have done all that I can to save him," I answered.

"You! Oh, you are most good!" said she. "It is I—I am the guilty one."

She bent down over the puckered brow, wiped away the moisture with her hair, and gave it a sacred kiss. But I noted, not without secret satisfaction, that she bestowed this caress as an expiation.

"Blanche—some drink," said the Count in a feeble voice.

"You see, he only recognizes me," she said as she brought him a glass. And by her tone and her affectionate attentions

to him she tried to heap insult on the feelings that bound us, immolating them to the sick man.

"Henriette," said I, "go and take some rest, I entreat you."

"Henriette no more!" she said, interrupting me with imperious haste.

"Go to bed, or you will be ill. Your children—he himself would desire you to spare yourself. There are times when selfishness is a sublime virtue."

"Yes," said she.

And she went, urging me to watch her husband, by gestures that might have seemed to indicate approaching delirium if the grace of childhood had not mingled with the passionate entreaty of repentance.

This scene, frightful as compared with the usual state of this placid soul, alarmed me; I feared the extravagance of her conscience. When the doctor next came, I explained to him the scruples, as of a sacred ermine, that were tormenting my spotless Henriette. This confidence, though very guarded, dispelled Monsieur Origet's suspicions, and he soothed the terrors of that sweet soul by assuring her that, from whatever cause, the Count must have had this violent attack, and that the chill he had taken under the walnut tree had been beneficial rather than injurious by bringing it on. Thus the Countess felt no remorse.

For fifty-two days the Count hovered between life and death. Henriette and I sat up with him in turn, each for twenty-six nights. Monsieur de Mortsauf undoubtedly owed his recovery to our care, and the scrupulous exactitude with which we carried out Monsieur Origet's instructions. Like all philosophical doctors, whose shrewd observation justifies them in doubting a noble action, even when it is merely the secret fulfillment of a duty, this man, while noticing the rivalry of heroism between the Countess and me, could not help

watching us with inquisitive eyes, so fearful was he of being cheated of his admiration.

"In such a case as this," said he on the occasion of his third visit, "death finds a ready auxiliary in the mind when it is so seriously affected as that of the Count. The doctor, the nurse, those who are about the patient, hold his life in their hands; for a single word, a mere gesture of apprehension, may be as fatal as poison."

As he spoke thus Origet studied my face and my expression; but he read in my eyes the sincerity of an honest soul. For, indeed, throughout this cruel illness, my mind was never once invaded by the very slightest of those involuntary evil ideas which sometimes sear the most innocent conscience.

For those who contemplate nature as a whole, everything tends to union by assimilation. The spiritual world must be governed by an analogous principle. In a pure realm all is pure. In Henriette's presence there was a fragrance as of heaven itself; it seems as though any not irreproachable thought must alienate me from her for ever. Hence she was not only my happiness, she was also my virtue. Finding us always unfailingly attentive and careful, the doctor put an indescribable tone of pious pathos into his words and manner, as if he were thinking—"These are the real sufferers; they hide their wounds and forgot them."

By an effect of contrast which, as this worthy man assured us, is common enough in such wrecks of manhood, Monsieur de Mortsauf was patient and tractable, never complained, and showed the most wonderful docility—he who in health could not do the least thing without a thousand comments. The secret of this submission to medicinal treatment, formerly so scouted, was a covert dread of death, another contrast in a man of unblemished courage. And this fear may, perhaps, account for various singular features in the altered temper he owed to his misfortunes.

Shall I confess to you, Natalie, and will you believe me?

Those fifty days, and the month that came after, were the golden days of my life. In the infinite expanse of the soul is not love what, in a broad valley, the river is to which flow all the rains, the brooks and torrents, into which are borne the trees and flowers, the gravel of its banks, and the fragments of the higher rocks; it is fed alike by storms and by the slow tribute of rippling springs. Yes, when we love, everything feeds love.

The first great danger past, the Countess and I became accustomed to sickness. In spite of the confusion caused by the constant care needed by the Count, his room, which we had found in such disorder, was made neat and pretty. Ere long we lived there like two beings dropped on a desert island; for not only do troubles isolate us, but they silence the petty conventionality of the world. And then for the sick man's benefit we were forced into contact such as no other event could have brought about. How often did our hands meet, heretofore so shy, in doing her husband some service. Was it not my part to support and help Henriette? Carried away by a duty that may be compared with that of a soldier at an outpost, she would often forget to eat; then I would bring her food, sometimes on her knee—a hasty meal necessitating a hundred little services. It was a childish scene on the brink of a yawning grave. She would hastily order me to prepare what might save the Count some discomfort, and employ me on a variety of trivial tasks.

In the early days, when the imminence of danger stifled the subtle distinctions of ordinary life, as on the field of battle, she inevitably neglected the reserve which every woman, even the most simple-minded, maintains in her speech, looks, and behavior when she is surrounded by the world or by her family, but which is incompatible with the undress of intimacy. Would she not come to call me at the chirp of awakening birds in a morning wrapper that sometimes allowed me a glimpse of the dazzling charms, which, in my wild hopes, I

regarded as my own? Though always dignified and lofty, could she not also be familiar? And, indeed, during the first few days, that danger so completely eliminated every passionate meaning from the privacy of our intimate intercourse, that she thought of no harm; and afterward, when reflection came, she felt perhaps that any change of demeanor would imply an insult as much to herself as to me. We found ourselves insensibly familiarized, half-wed, as it were. She showed herself nobly confiding, as sure of me as of herself. Thus I grew more deeply into her heart.

The Countess was my Henriette once more, Henriette constrained to love me yet more, as I strove to be her second self. Ere long, I never had to wait for her hand, which she would give me irresistibly at the least beseeching glance; and I could study with delight the outliness of her fine figure without her shrinking from my gaze, during the long hours while we sat listening to the patient's slumbers. The slender joys we allowed ourselves, the appealing looks, the words spoken in a whisper not to awake the Count, the hopes and fears repeated again and again, in short the myriad details of this fusion of two hearts so long sundered, stood out distinctly against the sad gloom of the real scene before us. We read each other's souls through and through in the course of this long test, to which the strongest affections sometimes succumb, unable to withstand the familiarity of every hour, and dropping away after testing the unyielding cohesion which makes life so heavy or so light a burden.

You know what mischief comes of a master's long illness, what disorder in his business; there is never time for anything; the stoppage put to his life hampers the movement of the house and family. Though everything always fell on Madame de Mortsauf, the Count was of use on the estate; he went to talk to the farmers, he called on the business agents, he drew the rents; if she was the soul, still he was the body. I now appointed myself steward that she might nurse the

Count without fear of ruin out of doors. She accepted everything without apologies, without thanks. This partition of household cares was another happy community of interests, and the orders I gave in her name. In her room in the evening we often discussed the children's prospects. These conversations lent a still further semblance of reality to our make-believe married life. How gladly would Henriette lend herself to my playing the master's part, putting me in his place at table, sending me to speak to the gamekeeper; and all with simple innocence, but not without the secret pleasure which the most virtuous woman on earth must feel at finding a middle course combining strict observation of every law with the satisfaction of her unconfessed wishes. The Count, nullified by illness, was no longer a weight on his wife or on the house; and now the Countess was herself, she had a right to attend to me and make me the object of endless cares. What joy I felt on discovering in her a purpose of which she, perhaps, was but vaguely conscious, though it was exquisitely expressed—of revealing to me all the worth of her person and her character, of making me feel the change that came over her when she felt herself understood! This blossom, constantly curled up in the cold atmosphere of her home, unfolded before my eyes and for me alone; she had as much delight in opening as I had in looking on with the inquisitive eye of love.

On the mornings when I slept late, after sitting up all night, Henriette was up before any one. She preserved the most perfect silence; Jacques and Madeleine, without needing to be told, went away to play. She would devise endless wiles to lay my table herself, and she would serve my breakfast with such a sparkle of glee in every movement, with such a wild swallow-like precision, with such a color in her cheeks, such quaverings in her voice, such a lynx-like keenness of eye! Can such expansions of the soul be described? She was often overpowered by fatigue; but if by chance at one of

these moments I needed anything she found fresh strength for me, as for her children; she started up active, busy, and glad. She loved to shed her tenderness like sunbeams through the air. Yes, Natalie, some women here below enjoy the privileges of angelic spirits, and, like them, diffuse the light which Saint-Martin, the unknown philosopher, tells us is intelligent, melodious, and fragrant.

Henriette, secure in my reticence, rejoiced in lifting the heavy curtain which hid the future from us by showing herself to me as two women: the woman in bonds who had fascinated me in spite of her asperities; the woman freed, whose sweetness was to seal my love to eternity. What a difference! Madame de Mortsauf was a love-bird transported into cold Europe, sadly drooping on its perch, mute and dying in the cage where it is kept by some naturalist; Henriette was the bird singing its Oriental raptures in a grove on the banks of the Ganges, and flying like a living gem from bough to bough amid the rosy flowers of an ever-blooming Volkameria.

Her beauty was renewed, her spirit revived. These constant fireworks of gladness were a secret between our two souls; for to the Countess the eye of the Abbé de Dominis, who represented the world, was more alarming than her husband's. She, like me, took pleasure in giving her words ingenious turns; she hid her glee under a jest and veiled the evidences of her affection under the specious flag of gratitude.

"We have put your friendship to the severest tests, Félix," she would say at dinner. "We may surely grant him such liberties as we allow to Jacques, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

The austere abbé replied with the kindly smile of a pious man who reads hearts and finds them pure; indeed, he always treated the Countess with the respect mingled with adoration that we feel for angels.

Twice in those fifty days the Countess went perhaps across the border-line that limited our affection; but those two occa-

sions were shrouded in a veil that was not lifted till our day of supreme avowals. One morning, in the early days of the Count's illness, just when she was repenting of having treated me so severely by denying me the harmless privileges of a chastened affection, I sat waiting for her to take my place. I was overtired, and fell asleep, my head resting against the wall. I awoke with a start, feeling my forehead touched by something mysteriously cool, that gave me a sensation as if a rose had lain on it. I saw the Countess some steps away from me, saying—

"Here I am!"

I went away, but, as I wished her good-morning, I took her hand and felt that it was moist and trembling.

"Are you ailing?" I asked.

"Why do you ask?" she inquired. I looked at her, coloring with confusion.

"I had been dreaming," I answered.

One evening, during the last visits paid by Origet, who had pronounced the Count certainly convalescent, I was in the garden with Jacques and Madeleine; we were all three lying on the steps absorbed in a game of jackstraws that we had contrived with splinters of straw and hooks made of pins. Monsieur de Mortsauf was asleep. The doctor, while waiting for his horse to be put to, was talking in a low voice to the Countess in the drawing-room. Monsieur Origet presently left without my noticing his departure. After seeing him off, Henriette leaned against the window, whence she looked down on us for a long time, though we did not know it. It was one of those hot evenings when the sky turns to copper color, when the country sends out a thousand confused voices to the echoes. A last gleam of sunshine lingered on the roofs, the flowers of the garden scented the air, the bells of the cattle being brought home to the byres came from afar. And we, in sympathy with the stillness of this calm hour, stifled our laughter for fear of waking the Count.

Suddenly, above the flutter of a gown, I heard the guttural gasp of a strongly suppressed sob; I rushed into the drawing-room, I found the Countess sitting in the window recess, her handkerchief to her face; she knew my step, and, by an imperious gesture, desired me to leave her alone. I went up to her, heartsick with alarm, and wanted to force away her handkerchief; her face was drowned in tears. She fled to her own room, and did not come out till it was time for prayers. For the first time in those fifty days I led her to the terrace, and asked her the cause of her agitation; but she affected the most flippant cheerfulness, justifying it by Origet's good news.

"Henriette, Henriette," said I, "you knew that when I found you crying. Between us a lie is preposterous. Why would you not allow me to wipe away your tears? Can they have been for me?"

"I was thinking," she answered, "that to me this illness has been a respite from misery. Now that there is nothing more to fear for Monsieur de Mortsauf I must fear for myself."

She was right. The Count's returning health was marked by his grotesque moods; he began to declare that neither his wife, nor I, nor the doctor knew how to treat him; we were all ignorant of his complaint and of his constitution, of his sufferings, and of the suitable remedies. Origet, infatuated by heaven knows what quackery, thought it was a degeneracy of the secretions, while he ought only to have studied the disorder of the pylorus!

One day, looking at us mischievously, like a man who has spied out or guessed something, he said to his wife, with a smile—

"Well, my dear, and if I had died—you would have regretted me, no doubt, but, confess, you would have been resigned."

"I should have worn court mourning, red and black," she said, laughing, to silence him.

It was especially with regard to his food, which the doctor had carefully limited, forbidding that the patient's craving should be satisfied, that we had the most violent scenes and outcries, with which nothing could be compared in the past, for the Count's temper was all the more atrocious for having been to sleep, so to speak. Fortified by the physician's orders and the faithfulness of the servants, and confirmed by me, for I saw in this contest a way of teaching her to govern her husband, the Countess was resolute in her resistance; she listened with a calm countenance to his frenzy and scolding; by thinking of him as a child—as he was—she accustomed herself to hear his abusive words. Thus at last I was so happy as to see her assert her authority over this disordered mind. The Count called out, but he obeyed; and he obeyed all the more after the greatest outcry.

In spite of the evidence of the results, Henriette would often shed tears at the sight of this feeble and haggard old man, his forehead yellower than a falling leaf, his eyes dim, his hands tremulous; she would blame herself for her sternness and could seldom resist the delight she saw in the Count's eyes when, as she doled out his meals, she exceeded the doctor's restrictions. She was all the sweeter and milder to him for having been so to me; still, there were shades of difference which filled my heart with boundless joy. She was not indefatigable; she knew when to call the servants to wait on the Count if his whims were too many in rapid succession, and he began to complain of her misunderstanding him.

The Countess purposed an act of thanksgiving to God for Monsieur de Mortsauf's recovery; she commanded a special mass and bade me offer her my arm to escort her to church. I did her bidding; but during the service I went to call on Monsieur and Madame de Chessel. On my return she tried to scold me.

"Henriette," said I, "I am incapable of deceit. I can throw myself into the water to rescue my enemy when he is

drowning, I can lend him my cloak to warm him—in short, I can forgive, but I cannot forget."

She said nothing, but pressed my arm to her heart.

"You are an angel; you were, no doubt, sincere in your thanksgiving," I went on. "The mother of the Prince of the Peace was snatched from the hands of a mob who wanted to kill her, and when the Queen asked her, 'What did you do?'—'I prayed for them,' she said. Women are all like that; I am a man, and necessarily imperfect."

"Do not slander yourself," said she, shaking my arm sharply. "Perhaps you are better than I am."

"Yes," I replied, "for I would give eternity for a single day of happiness, while to you!——"

"Me!" she cried, with a haughty glance.

I was silent, and my eyes fell under the lightning of her eyes.

"Me!" she went on. "Of what *me* are you speaking? There are in me many *mes*. Those children," and she pointed to Jacques and Madeleine, "are part of me. Félix," she said in a heart-rending tone, "do you think me selfish? Do you think that I could sacrifice eternity to recompense him who is sacrificing this life for me? The thought is a shocking one; it is contrary to every sentiment of religion. Can a woman who falls so low rise again? Can her happiness absolve her? You will drive me soon to decide the question! Yes, I am betraying at last a secret of my conscience; the idea has often crossed my mind, I have expiated it by bitter penance; it was the cause of the tears you wanted me to account for the other day——"

"Are you not attributing too great importance to certain things on which ordinary women set a high value and which you ought to——"

"Oh," cried she, interrupting me, "do you value them less?"

Such an argument put an end to all reasoning.

"Well," she went on, "I will tell you! Yes, I could be so mean as to desert the poor old man whose life is in my hands. But, dear friend, those two poor, feeble little creatures you see before us, Jacques and Madeleine—would not they be left with their father? And do you think, I ask you, do you believe that they could survive three months under that man's insensate tyranny? If by failing in my duty, I alone"—she smiled loftily. "But should I not be killing my two children? Their doom would be certain. Great God!" she exclaimed, "how can we talk of such things? Go and marry, and leave me to die."

She spoke in a tone of such concentrated bitterness that she stifled the outburst of my passion.

"You cried out up there, under the walnut tree. I have just cried out here, under these alders. That is all. Henceforth I am silent."

"Your generosity overwhelms me," said she, looking up to heaven.

We had by this time reached the terrace and found the Count seated there in a chair, in the sunshine. The sight of that sunken face, hardly animated by a faint smile, extinguished the flames that had flared up from the ashes. I leaned against the parapet, contemplating the picture before me: the infirm man with his two still delicate children; his wife, pale with watching and grown thin from excess of work, from the alarms, and perhaps from the joys, of these two dreadful months, though at this moment she was deeply flushed from the emotions of the scene she had gone through. At the sight of this suffering family, shrouded under the tremulous foliage through which fell the gray light of a dull autumn day, I felt the ties relax which hold body and soul together. I experienced for the first time that moral revulsion which, it is said, the stoutest fighters feel in the fury of the fray, a sort of chilling madness that makes a coward of the bravest, a bigot of a disbeliever, which induces total indifference to

everything, even to the most vital sentiments—to honor, to love; for doubt robs us of all knowledge of ourselves, and disgusts us with life. Poor nervous creatures, who, by your high-strung organization, are delivered over defenseless to I know not what fatality, who shall be your peers and judges? I understood how the bold youth who had erewhile put out a hand to grasp the marshal's bâton, who had been no less skilled in diplomacy than intrepid as a captain, had become the unconscious murderer I saw before me! Could my own desires, at this moment wreathed with roses, bring me, too, to such an end? Appalled alike by the cause and the effect, asking, like the impious, where in all this was providence, I could not restrain two tears that fell down my cheeks.

"What is the matter, dear, good Félix?" asked Madeleine in her childish voice.

Then Henriette dispelled those black vapors and gloom by an anxious look, which shone on my soul like the sun.

At this moment the old groom from Tours brought me a letter, at the sight of which I could not help uttering a cry of surprise, and Madame de Mortsauf trembled at my dismay. I saw the seal of the cabinet. The King ordered me back. I held the letter out to her; she read it in a flash.

"He is going away!" said the Count.

"What will become of me?" she said to me, for the first time contemplating her desert without sunshine.

We paused in a stupefied frame of mind which oppressed us all equally, for we had never before so acutely felt that we were all indispensable to each other. The Countess, as she talked even of the most indifferent matters, spoke in an altered voice, as though the instrument had lost several strings and those that remained were loosened. Her movements were apathetic, her looks had lost their light. I begged her to confide her thoughts to me.

"Have I any thoughts?" said she.

She led me away to her room, made me sit down on the

sofa, hunted in the drawer of her dressing-table, and, then, kneeling down in front of me, she said—

"Here is all the hair I have lost these twelve months past; take it—it is yours by right; you will some day know how and why."

I gently bent over her, she did not shrink to avoid my lips, and I pressed them to her brow solemnly, with no guilty excitement, no inviting passion. Did she mean to sacrifice everything? Or had she, like me, only come to look over the precipice? If love had prompted her to abandon herself, she could not have been so profoundly calm, have given me that religious look, or have said in her clear voice—

"You have quite forgiven me?"

I set out in the evening, she accompanied me on the road to Frapesle, and we stood under the walnut tree; I pointed it out to her, telling her how I had first seen it, four years ago.

"The valley was so lovely!" I exclaimed.

"And now?" she said eagerly.

"Now you are under the tree," said I; "and the valley is our own."

She bent her head, and there we parted. She got into the carriage again with Madeleine and I into mine, alone.

On my return to Paris, I was fortunately taken up by a press of work which forcibly diverted my mind, and obliged me to live apart from the world, which forgot me. I corresponded with Madame de Mortsauf, to whom I sent my journal every week, and who replied twice a month. It was an obscure and busy life, resembling the overgrown, flowery nooks, quite unknown, which I had admired in the depths of the woods when composing fresh poems of flowers during the last fortnight.

All ye who love, bind yourselves by these delightful duties; impose a rule on yourselves to be carried out, as the church does on Christians every day.

The rigorous observances created by the Roman Catholic religion are a grand idea; they trace deeper and deeper grooves of duty in the soul by the repetition of acts which encourage hope and fear. The feelings always flow, a living stream, in these channels which keep the current within bounds and purify it, perpetually refreshing the heart and fertilizing life by the abounding treasures of hidden faith, a divine spring multiplying the single thought of a single love.

My passion, a relic of the Middle Ages, recalling the days of chivalry, became known, I know not how; perhaps the King and the Duc de Lenoncourt spoke of it. From this uppermost sphere, the story, at once romantic and simple, of a young man piously devoted to a beautiful woman who had no public, who was so noble in her solitude, and faithful without the support of duty, no doubt became known in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. I fouud myself the object of inconvenient attention in drawing-rooms, for an inconspicuous life has advantages which, once tasted, make the parade of a life in public unendurable. Just as eyes that are accustomed to see none but subdued colors are hurt by broad daylight, so there are minds averse to violent contrasts. I was then one of these; you may be surprised now to hear it; but have patience, the eccentricities of the Vandenesse you know will be accounted for.

I found women amiably disposed toward me and the world kind.

After the Duc de Berry's marriage the court became splendid once more, the French fêtes were revived. The foreign occupation was a thing of the past, prosperity returned, amusements were possible. Personages of illustrious rank or considerable wealth poured in from every part of Europe to the capital of intelligence, where all the advantages and the vices of other countries were magnified and intensified by French ingenuity.

Five months after leaving Clochegourde, my good angel

wrote me a letter in despair, telling me that her boy had had a serious illness, from which he had recovered indeed, but which had left her in dread for the future; the doctor had spoken of care being needed for his lungs—a terrible verdict that casts a black shadow on every hour of a mother's life. Hardly had Henriette drawn a breath of relief as Jacques was convalescent, before his sister made her anxious. Madeleine, the pretty flower that had done such credit to her mother's care, went through an illness which, though not serious, was a cause of anxiety in so fragile a constitution.

Crushed already by the fatigues of Jacques' long sickness, the Countess had no courage to meet this fresh blow, and the sight of these two beloved beings made her insensible to the increasing torment of her husband's temper. Storms, each blacker than the last, and bringing with it more stones, uprooted by their cruel surges the hopes that were most deeply rooted in her heart. Weary of strife she had submitted altogether to the Count's tyranny, for he had regained all his lost ground.

"When all my strength was devoted to enfolding my children," she wrote me, "could I use it to defy Monsieur de Mortsauf, could I defend myself against his aggressions when I was fighting with death? As I make my onward way, alone and feeble, between the two young, melancholy creatures at my side, I feel an invincible disgust of life. What blow can hurt me, or what affection can I respond to when I see Jacques motionless on the terrace, life no longer beaming in anything but his beautiful eyes, made larger by emaciation, as hollow as an old man's, and where—fatal prognostic—his forward intelligence is contrasted with his bodily weakness? When I see at my side my pretty Madeleine so lively, so fond, so brightly colored, now as pale as the dead; her very hair and eyes seem to me more pallid, she looks at me with languishing eyes as if she was bidding me farewell. No food tempts her, or, if she has a fancy for anything, she alarms me by her

strange appetites; the innocent child, though one with my heart, blushes as she confesses to them.

"Do what I will, I cannot amuse my children; they smile at me, but the smile is forced from them by my playfulness and is not spontaneous; they cry because they cannot respond to my fondness. Illness has left them completely run down, even their affection. So you may imagine how dismal Clochegourde is. Monsieur de Mortsauf reigns unopposed.

"Oh my glory, my dear friend!" she wrote me again, "you must love me well indeed if you can love me still—can love me, so apathetic as I am, so unresponsive, so petrified by grief."

At this juncture, when I felt myself more deeply appealed to than ever, when I lived only in her soul, on which I strove to shed the luminous breath of morning and the hope of purpled evenings, I met, in the rooms of the Elysée Bourbon, one of those superb English ladies who are almost queens. Immensely wealthy, the daughter of a race unstained by any mésalliance since the time of the Conquest, married to an old man, one of the most distinguished members of the British peerage—all these advantages were no more than accessories adding to her beauty, her manners, her wit, a faceted lustre that dazzled before it charmed you. She was the idol of the day, and reigned all the more despotically over Paris society because she had the qualities indispensable to success, the iron hand in a velvet glove spoken of by Bernadotte.

You know the curious individuality of the English—the impassable and arrogant channel, the icy St. George's straits that they set between themselves and those who have not been introduced to them. The human race might be an ant-heap on which they tread; they recognize none of their species but those whom they accept; they do not understand the language even of the rest; those have lips that move and eyes that see; but neither voice nor looks can reach so high; to them the herd are as though they were not. Thus the

English are an image of their island where the law rules everything; where in each sphere everything is uniform; where the practice of virtue seems to be the inevitable working of wheels that move at fixed hours.

These fortifications of polished steel built up round an Englishwoman, caged by golden wires into her home, where her feeding trough and drinking cup, her perches and her food are all perfection, lend her irresistible attractions. Never did a nation more elaborately scheme for the hypocrisy of a married woman by placing her always midway between social life and death. For her there is no compromise between shame and honor; the fall is utter, or there is no slip; it is all or nothing—the *To be or not to be* of Hamlet. This alternative, combined with the habits of disdain to which manners accustom her, makes an Englishwoman a creature apart in the world. She is but a poor creature, virtuous perforce, and ready to abandon herself, condemned to perpetual falsehood buried in her soul; but she is enchanting in form, because the race has thrown everything into form. Hence the beauties peculiar to the women of that country: the exaltation of an affection in which life is compulsorily summed up, their extravagant care of their person, the refinement of their love—so elegantly expressed in the famous scene in Romeo and Juliet, in which Shakespeare has with one touch depicted the Englishwoman.

To you, who envy them so many things, what can I say that you do not know about these fair sirens, apparently impenetrable but so quickly known, who believe that love is enough for love, and who taint their pleasures with satiety by never varying them, whose soul has but one note, whose voice but one word—an ocean of love, in which, if a man has not bathed, he will for ever remain ignorant of one form of poetic sensuality, just as a man who has never seen the sea must always lack certain chords to his lyre?

You know the purport of these words. My acquaintance

with Lady Dudley was notorious. At an age when the senses exert their greatest power over our decisions, and in a man whose fires had been so violently suppressed, the image of the saint who was enduring her long martyrdom at Clochegourde shone so brightly that he could resist every fascination. This fidelity was the distinction that won me Lady Arabella's attention. My obstinacy increased her passion. What she longed for, like many Englishwomen, was something conspicuous and extraordinary. She craved for spice, for pepper on which to feed her heart, as English epicures insist on pungent condiments to revive their palate. The lethargy produced in these women's lives by unfailing perfection in everything about them, and methodical regularity of habits, reacts in a worship of the romantic and difficult. I was incapable of gauging this character. The more I retired into cold disdain, the more eager was Lady Dudley. This contest, of which she boasted, excited some curiosity in certain drawing-rooms, and this was the first fruits of satisfaction which made her feel it incumbent on her to triumph. Ah! I should have been saved if only some friend had repeated the odious speech she had uttered concerning Madame de Mortsauf and me—

"I am sick," she said, "of this turtle-dove sighing!"

Though I have no wish to justify my crime, I must point out to you, Natalie, that a man has less chances of resisting a woman than you women have of evading our pursuit. Our manners forbid to our sex those tactics of stern repression which in you are baits to tempt the lover, and which indeed propriety requires of you. In us, on the contrary, some jurisprudence of masculine coxcombry treats reserve as ridiculous; we leave you the monopoly of modesty to secure to you the privilege of conferring favors; but reverse the parts, and a man is crushed by satire. Protected as I was by my passion, I was not at an age to be insensible to the threefold attractions of pride, devotion, and beauty. When Lady Arabella laid at my feet the homage paid to her at a ball of which she

was the queen, when she watched my eye to read whether I admired her dress, and thrilled with pleasure when she pleased me, I was agitated by her agitation. She stood on ground, too, whence I could not fly: it was impossible for me to refuse certain invitations in the diplomatic circle; her rank opened every house to her; and with the ingenuity which women can display to obtain the thing they wish for, she contrived at table that the mistress of the house should seat me next to her.

Then she would murmur in my ear—

"If I were loved as Madame de Mortsauf is, I would sacrifice everything to you." She proposed the humblest conditions with a smile, she promised uncompromising reticence, or besought me to allow her only to love me. She spoke these words to me one day, satisfying alike the capitulation of a timid conscience and the unbridled cravings of youth—

"Your friend for ever, and your mistress when you please!"

Finally she resolved to make my sense of honor the means to my ruin; she bribed my manservant; and one evening, after a party where she had shone with such beauty that she was sure of having captivated me, I found her in my rooms. This scandal was heard of in England, where the aristocracy was in as much consternation as heaven at the fall of its highest angel. Lady Dudley came down from her clouds in the British empyrean, kept nothing but her own fortune, and tried by self-sacrifice to eclipse the woman whose virtue had led to this celebrated scandal. Lady Arabella, like the devil on the pinnacle of the temple, took pleasure in showing me the richest kingdoms of her ardent world.

Read my confession, I beseech you, with indulgence. It deals with one of the most interesting problems of human life, with a crisis through which the greater portion of mankind must pass, and which I long to account for, if it were only to light a beacon on the reef. This beautiful English lady, so slender, so fragile; this milk-white woman, so crushed,

so breakable, so meek, with her refined brow crowned with such soft tan-brown hair; this creature, whose brilliancy seems but a transient phosphorescence, has a frame of iron. No horse, however fiery, can defy her sinewy wrist, her hand that seems so weak, and that nothing can tire. She has the foot of the roe, a small, wiry, muscular foot of indescribable beauty of form. Her strength fears no rivalry; no man can keep up with her on horseback; she would win a steeplechase riding a centaur; she shoots stags, and does it without checking her horse. Her frame knows not perspiration; it radiates a glow in the air, and lives in water, or it would perish.

Her passion is quite African; her demands are a tornado like the sand-spouts of the desert—the desert whose burning vastness is to be seen in her eyes, the desert all azure and love, with its unchanging sky and its cool, star-lit nights.

What a contrast to Clochegourde! The East and the West; one attracting to herself the smallest atoms of moisture to nourish her; the other exhaling her soul, enveloping all who were faithful to her in a luminous atmosphere. This one eager and slight; the other calm and solid.

Tell me, have you ever duly considered the general bearing of English habits? Are they not the apotheosis of matter, a definite, premeditated, and skillfully adapted epicureanism? Whatever she may do or say, England is materialist—unconsciously perhaps. She has religious and moral pretensions from which the divine spirituality, the soul of catholicism, is absent; its fruitful grace can never be replaced by any hypocrisy, however well acted. She possesses in the highest degree the science of life, which adds a grace to the smallest details of materialism: which makes your slipper the most exquisite slipper in the world; which gives your linen an indescribable fragrance; which lines and perfumes your drawers with cedar; which pours out at a fixed hour a delicious cup of tea, scientifically infused; which banishes dust, and nails down carpets from the very doorstep to the inmost nook of the house;

which washes the cellar walls, polishes the door knocker, gives elasticity to the springs of a carriage; which turns all matter into a nutritious pulp, a comfortable, lustrous, and cleanly medium in the midst of which the soul expires in enjoyment and which produces a terrible monotony of ease; which results in a life uncrossed and devoid of initiative; which, in one word, makes a machine of you.

Thus I came suddenly, in the heart of this English luxury, on a woman perhaps unique of her sex, who entangled me in the meshes of that love born anew from its death, whose prodigality I met with severe austerity—that love which has overpowering charms and an electricity of its own, which often leads you to heaven through the ivory gates of its half-slumbers, or carries you up mounted behind its winged shoulders. A horribly graceless love that laughs at the corpses of those it has slain; love devoid of memory, a cruel love, like English politics, and to which almost every man succumbs.

You understand the problem now. Man is composed of matter and spirit. In him the animal nature culminates and the angel begins. Hence the conflict we all have felt between a future destiny of which we have presentiments and the memories of our original instincts from which we are not wholly detached—the love of the flesh and the love that is divine. One man amalgamates the two in one; another abstains. This one seeks the whole sex through, to satisfy his anterior appetites; that one idealizes it in a single woman, who to him epitomizes the universe. Some hover undecided between the raptures of matter and those of the spirit; others spiritualize the flesh and ask of it what it can never give. If, considering these general features of love, you take into account the repulsions and the affinities which, being the outcome of diversity of constitution, presently break the bonds between those who have not tested each other; if you add to this the errors resulting from the hopes of those who live more especially by the mind, by the heart, or by action—who

think, or feel, or act—and whose vocation is cheated or misprized in an association of two human beings, each equally complex, you will be largely indulgent to some misfortunes to which society is pitiless.

Well, Lady Arabella satisfies the instincts, the organs, the appetites, the vices, and the virtues of the subtle matter of which we are compounded; she was the mistress of my body. Madame de Mortsauf was the wife of my soul. The love the mistress could satisfy has it limits; matter is finite, its properties have recognized forces, it is liable to inevitable saturation; I often felt an indescribable void in Paris with Lady Dudley. Infinity is the realm of the heart; love unbounded was at Clochegourde. I was passionately in love with Lady Arabella, and certainly, though the animal in her was supreme, she had also a superior intelligence; her ironical conversation embraced everything.

But I worshiped Henriette. If at night I wept with joy, in the morning I wept with remorse. There are some women shrewd enough to conceal their jealousy under angelic sweetness; these are women who, like Lady Dudley, are past thirty. Women then know how to feel and calculate both at once; they squeeze out the juice of the present and yet think of the future; they can stifle their often quite justifiable groans with the determination of a hunter who does not feel a wound as he rides in pursuit of the bugle call.

Without ever speaking of Madame de Mortsauf, Arabella tried to kill her in my soul, where she constantly found her, and her own passion flamed higher under the breath of this ineradicable love. To triumph, if possible, by comparisons to her own advantage, she would never be suspicious, nor provoking, nor curious, as most young women are; but, like a lioness that has carried her prey in her mouth and brought it to her den to devour, she took care that nothing should disturb her happiness and watched me like an unsubdued conquest. I wrote to Henriette under her very eyes, she never

read a single line, she never made the least attempt to know the address on my letters. I was perfectly free. She seemed to have said to herself, "If I lose, I shall blame no one but myself."

And she trusted proudly to a love so devoted that she would have laid down her life without hesitation if I had asked it of her. In fact, she made me believe that if I should abandon her she would at once kill herself.

It was a thing to hear when she sang the praises of the Indian custom for widows to burn themselves on their husband's funeral pyre.

"Though in India the practice is a distinction reserved to the higher castes, and is consequently little appreciated by Europeans, who are incapable of perceiving the proud dignity of the privilege, you must confess," she would say to me, "that in the dead level of our modern manners the aristocracy cannot resume its place unless by exceptional feelings. How can I show the middle-class that the blood flowing in my veins is not the same as theirs, if not in dying in another way than they die? Women of no birth can have diamonds, silks, horses, even coats-of-arms, which ought to be ours alone, for a name can be purchased! But to love, unabashed, in opposition to the law, to die for the idol she has chosen, and make a shroud of the sheets off her bed to bring earth and heaven into subjection to a man and thus rob the Almighty of His right to make a god, never to be false to him, not even for virtue's sake—for to refuse him anything in the name of duty is to abandon one's self to something that is not he—whether it be another man or a mere idea, it is a betrayal! These are the heights to which vulgar women cannot rise; they know only two roads—the highway of virtue or the miry path of the courtesan."

She argued, you see, from pride; she flattered all my vanities by deifying them; she set me so high that she could only reach to my knees; all the fascinations of her mind found

expression in her slave-like attitude and absolute submission. She would remain a whole day lounging at my feet in silence, gazing at me, waiting on my pleasure like a seraglio slave. What words can describe the first six months when I gave myself up to the enervating joys of an affection full of raptures varied by the knowledge of experience that was concealed under the vehemence of passion. Such joys, a revelation of the poetry of the senses, constitute the strong link that binds young men to women older than themselves; but this link is the convict's chain; it leaves an indelible scar, implanting a premature distaste for fresh and innocent love rich in blossom only, which cannot serve us with alcohol in curiously chased golden cups, enriched with precious stones, sparkling with inexhaustible fires.

When I tasted the enjoyments of which I had dreamed, knowing nothing of them, which I had expressed in my nosegays, and which the union of souls makes a thousand times more intense, I found no lack of paradoxes to justify myself in my own eyes for the readiness with which I slaked my thirst at this elegant cup. Often when I felt lost in immeasurable lassitude, my soul, freed from my body, flew far from earth, and I fancied that such pleasures were a means of annihilating matter and freeing the spirit for its sublimest flights. Not unfrequently Lady Dudley, like many another woman, took advantage of the excitement superinduced by excessive happiness to bind me by solemn vows; and she could even tempt me into blaspheming and denouncing the angel at Clochegourde.

Being a traitor, I became a cheat. I wrote to Madame de Mortsauf as though I were still the boy in the ill-made blue coat of whom she was so fond; but, I own, her gift of second-sight appalled me when I thought of the disaster any indiscretion might bring on the charming castle of my hopes. Often in the midst of my happiness a sudden pang froze me; I heard the name of Henriette spoken by a voice from on

high, like the "Cain, where is Abel?" of the Scripture narrative.

My letters remained unanswered. I was in mortal anxiety and wanted to set out for Clochegourde. Arabella raised no obstacles, but she spoke as a matter of course of going with me to Touraine. Her fancy, spurred by difficulty, her presentiments, justified by more happiness than she had hoped for, had given birth in her to a real affection, which she now meant should be unique. Her womanly wit showed her that this journey might be made a means of detaching me completely from Madame de Mortsauf; and I, blinded by alarm and misled by genuine guilelessness, did not see the snare in which I was to be caught.

Lady Dudley proposed the fullest concessions, and anticipated every objection. She agreed to remain in the country near Tours, unknown, disguised, never to go out by daylight, and to choose for our meetings an hour of the night when no one could recognize us.

I started on horseback from Tours for Clochegourde. I had my reasons for this; I needed a horse for my nocturnal expeditions, and I had an Arab, sent to the Marchioness by Lady Hester Stanhope, which I had taken in exchange for the famous picture by Rembrandt now hanging in her drawing-room in London, after it had come into my hands in so singular a way.

I took the road I had gone on foot six years before, and paused under the walnut tree. From thence I saw Madame de Mortsauf, in a white dress, on the terrace. I flew toward her with the swiftness of lightning, and in a few minutes was below the wall, traversing the distance in a direct line, as if I was riding a steeplechase. She heard the prodigious leaps of the Swallow of the Desert; and when I pulled up sharp at the corner of the terrace, she said, "Ah! Here you are!"

These four words struck me dumb. Then she knew of my

adventure! Who had told her of it? Her mother, whose odious letter she subsequently showed me. The indifference of that weak voice, formerly so full of vitality—the dead, colorless tone confessed a mature sorrow and breathed, as it were, a perfume of flowers cut off beyond all recovery. The tempest of my infidelity, like the floods of the Loire that bury the land past redemption in sand, had passed over her soul and made a desert where rich meadows had been green. I led my horse in by the side-gate; he knelt down on the grass at my command; and the Countess, who had come forward with a slow step, exclaimed, "What a beautiful creature!"

She stood with her arms crossed that I might not take her hand, and I understood her intention.

"I will go and tell Monsieur de Mortsauf," said she, and turned away.

I remained standing, quite confounded, letting her go, watching her—noble, deliberate, and proud as ever; whiter than I had ever seen her, her brow stamped with the yellow seal of the bitterest melancholy, and hanging her head like a lily weighed down by too much rain.

"Henriette!" I cried, with the passion of a man who feels himself dying.

She did not turn round, she did not pause; she scorned to tell me that she had taken back that name, that she would no longer answer to it; she walked on. In that terrible valley where millions of men must be lying turned to dust, while their souls now animate the surface of the globe, I may find myself very small in the midst of the crowd closely packed under the luminous dignities who shall light it up with their glory; but even there I shall be less utterly crushed than I was as I gazed at that white figure going up, up—as an undeviating flood mounts the streets of a town—up to Clochegourde, her home, the glory and the martyrdom of this Christian Dido!

I cursed Arabella in one word that would have killed her

had she heard it—and she had given up everything for me, as we leave all for God! I stood lost in an ocean of thought, seeing endless pain on every side of me.

Then I saw them all coming down; Jacques running with the impetuosity of his age; Madeleine, a gazelle with pathetic eyes, followed with her mother. Monsieur de Mortsauf came toward me with open arms, clasped me to him, and kissed me on both cheeks, saying, "Félix, I have heard—I owed my life to you!"

Madame de Mortsauf stood with her back to us, under pretense of showing the horse to Madeleine, who was amazed.

"The devil!" cried the Count in a fury, "that is a woman all over! They are looking at your horse."

Madeleine turned and came to me. I kissed her hand, looking at the Countess, who reddened.

"Madeleine seems much better," said I.

"Poor little girl!" replied the Countess, kissing her forehead.

"Yes, for the moment they are all well," said the Count. "I alone, my dear Félix, am a wreck, like an old tower about to fall."

"The general still suffers from his black dragons, it would seem," said I, looking at Madame de Mortsauf.

"We all have our *blue devils*," she replied. "That, I think, is the English word!"

We went up to the house, all walking together, all feeling that something serious had happened. She had no wish to be alone with me; in short, I was a visitor.

"By the way, what about your horse?" said the Count, when we went out.

"You see," retorted the Countess, "I was wrong to think about it, and equally wrong not to think about it."

"Why, yes," said he; "there is a time for everything."

"I will go to him," said I, finding this cold reception unendurable. "I alone can unsaddle him and put him up

properly. My groom is coming from Chinon by coach, and he will rub him down."

"Is the groom from England too?" said she.

"They are only made there," replied the Count, becoming cheerful as he saw his wife depressed.

His wife's coolness was an opportunity for tacit opposition; he loaded me with kindness. I learned what a burden a husband's friendship can be. Do not suppose that it is when the wife lavishes an affection of which he seems to be robbed, that her husband's attentions are overpowering to a noble soul! No. It is when that love has fled that they are odious and unendurable. A friendly understanding, which is the indispensable condition of such attachments, is then seen as a mere means; it then is a burden, and as horrible as all means are when no longer justified by the ends.

"My dear Félix," said the Count, taking my hands, and pressing them affectionately, "you must forgive Madame de Mortsauf. Women must be fractious, their weakness is their excuse; they cannot possibly have the equable temper which gives us strength of character. She has the greatest regard for you. I know it; but——"

While the Count was speaking, Madame de Mortsauf moved gradually away from us so as to leave us together.

"Félix," said he in an undertone, as he looked at his wife returning to the house with her two children, "I cannot think what has been going on in Madame de Mortsauf's mind, but within the last six weeks her temper has completely altered. She who used to be so gentle, so devoted, has become incredibly sulky."

Manette afterward told me that the Countess had fallen into a state of dejection which left her insensible to the Count's aggravations. Finding no tender spot into which to thrust his darts, the man had become as fidgety as a boy when the insect he is torturing ceases to wriggle. At this moment he needed a confidant, as an executioner needs a mate.

"Try to question Madame de Mortsauf," he went on after a pause. "A woman always has secrets from her husband, but to you she will perhaps confide the secret of her trouble. If it should cost me half my remaining days of life and half my fortune, I would sacrifice everything to make her happy. She is so indispensable to my existence. If in my old age I should miss that angel from my side, I should be the most miserable of men! I would hope to die easy. Tell her she will not have to put up with me for long. I, Félix, my poor friend—I am going fast; I know it. I hide the dreadful truth from all the world; why distress them before the time? Still the pylorus, my good friend. I have at last mastered the causes of the malady: my sensitive feelings are surely killing me. In fact, all our emotions converge on the gastric centre——"

"So that people of strong feeling die of indigestion," said I with a smile.

"Do not laugh, Félix; nothing is truer. Too great a grief overexcites the great sympathetic nerve. This excessive sensibility keeps up a constant irritation of the mucous membrane of the stomach. If this condition continues it leads to disturbance of the digestive functions, at first imperceptible; the secretions are vitiated, the appetite is morbid, and digestion becomes uncertain; ere long acute suffering supervenes, worse and more frequent every day. Finally the organic mischief reaches a climax; it is as though some poison were lurking in every bowl. The mucous membrane thickens, the valve of the pylorus hardens, and a scirrhus forms there of which the patient must die. Well, that is my case, my dear boy. The induration is progressing; nothing can stop it. Look at my straw-colored skin, my dry, bright eye, my excessive emaciation? I am withering up. What can you expect? I brought the germ of the complaint in me from exile: I went through so much at that time.

"And my marriage, which might have repaired the mis-

chief done during the emigration, far from soothing my ulcerated soul, only reopened the wound. What have I found here? Eternal alarms on account of my children, domestic trials, a fortune to be patched up, economy which entailed a thousand privations I had to inflict on my wife, while I was the first to suffer from them.

"And, above all, to you alone can I confide the secret—this is my greatest trouble. Though Blanche is an angel, she does not understand me; she knows nothing of my sufferings, she only frets them. I forgive her. It is a terrible thing to say, my friend, but a less virtuous woman would have made me happier by little soothing ways which never occur to Blanche, for she is as great a simpleton as a baby! Add to this that the servants do nothing but plague me. They are perfect owls! I speak French, and they hear Greek.

"When our fortune was somewhat amended by hook and by crook, when I began to be less worried, the mischief was done; I had reached the stage of morbid appetite. Then I had that bad illness which Origet so entirely misunderstood. In short, at this moment I have not six months to live."

I listened to the Count in terror. On seeing the Countess, the glitter of her hard eyes and the straw-colored complexion of her brow had struck me. I now dragged the Count back to the house as I pretended to listen to his complaining, interspersed with medical dissertations, but I was thinking only of Henriette, and was bent on studying her.

I found the Countess in the drawing-room; she was listening to a lesson in mathematics that the Abbé de Dominis was giving to Jacques, while she showed Madeleine a stitch in tapestry. Formerly she would have found means, on the day of my arrival, to put off such occupations and devote herself to me; but my love was so deep and true that I buried in the depths of my heart the sorrow I felt at the contrast between the past and present; for I could see that terrible yellow tinge on her heavenly face, like the reflection of a divine

light which Italian painters have given to the faces of their female saints. I felt in my soul the cold blast of death. When the blaze of her eyes fell on me, bereft now of the liquid moisture in which her looks had floated, I shuddered; and I then observed certain changes due to grief which I had not noticed out of doors. The fine lines which, when I had last seen her, were but faintly traced on her forehead, were now deep furrows; her temples, bluely veined, were dry and hollow; her eyes were sunk under reddened brows and had dark circles round them; she had the look of fruit on which bruises are beginning to show, and which has turned prematurely yellow from the ravages of a worm within.

And was it not I, whose sole ambition it had been to pour happiness in a full tide into her soul, who had shed bitterness into the spring whence her life derived strength and her courage refreshment?

I sat down by her, and said in a voice tearful with repentance—

"Is your health satisfactory?"

"Yes," she replied, looking straight into my eyes. "Here is my health," and she pointed lovingly to Madeleine and Jacques.

Madeleine, who had come out victorious from her struggle with nature, at fifteen was a woman; she had grown, the tint of a China rose bloomed in her dark cheeks; she had lost the light heedlessness of a child that looks everything in the face, and had begun to cast down her eyes. Her movements, like her mother's, were rare and sober; her figure slight, and the charms of her bust already filling out. A woman's vanity had smoothed her fine black hair, parted into bands on her Spanish-looking brow. She had a look of the pretty mediæval busts, so refined in outline, so slender in mould, that the eye that lingers on them fears lest it should break them; but health, the fruit that had ripened after so much care, had given her cheek the velvety texture of the peach, and a silky

down on her neck which caught the light—as it did in her mother.

She would live! God had written it, sweet bud of the loveliest of human blossoms, on the long lashes of your eyelids, on the slope of your shoulders, which promised to be as beautiful as your mother's had been!

This nut-brown maiden, with the growth of a poplar, was a contrast indeed to Jacques, a fragile youth of seventeen, whose head looked too large, for his brow had expanded so rapidly as to give rise to alarms, whose fevered, weary eyes were in keeping with a deep sonorous voice. The throat gave out too great a volume of sound, just as the eye betrayed too much thought. Here Henriette's intellect, soul, and heart were consuming with eager fires a too frail body; for Jacques had the milk-white complexion touched with the burning flush that is seen in young English girls marked by that awful scourge, consumption, to be felled within a limited time—delusive health!

Following a gesture by which Henriette, after pointing to Madeleine, made me look at Jacques, tracing geometrical figures and algebraical sums on a blackboard before the abbé, I was startled at this glimpse of death hidden under roses and respected the unhappy mother's mistake.

"When I see them so well, joy silences all my griefs, as, indeed, they are silent and vanish when I see those two ill. My friend," said she, her eyes beaming with motherly pleasure, "if other affections desert us, those that find their reward here—duties fulfilled and crowned with success—make up for defeat endured elsewhere. Jacques, like you, will be a highly cultivated man, full of virtuous learning; like you, he will be an honor to his country—which he may help to govern perhaps, guided by you, who will hold so high a place—but I will try to make him faithful to his first affections. Madeleine, dear creature, has already an exquisite heart. She is as pure as the snow on the highest Alpine summit; she will have the

devotedness and the sweet intelligence of woman; she is proud, she will be worthy of the Lenoncourts!

"The mother, once so distraught, is now very happy—happy in an infinite and unmixed happiness; yes, my life is full, my life is rich. As you see, God has given me joys that unfold from permitted affection, has infused bitterness into those to which I was being tempted by a dangerous attachment."

"Well done!" cried the abbé gleefully. "Monsieur le Vicomte knows as much as I do——"

Jacques, as he finished the demonstration, coughed a little.

"That is enough for to-day, my dear abbé," said the Countess in some agitation. "Above all, no chemistry lesson! Go out riding, Jacques," she added, kissing her son with the justifiable rapture of a mother's caress, her eyes fixed on me as if to insult my remembrances. "Go, dear, and be prudent."

"But you have not answered my question," said I, as she followed Jacques with a long look. "Do you suffer any pain?"

"Yes, sometimes in my chest. If I was only in Paris I could rise to the honors of gastritis, the fashionable complaint."

"My mother suffers a great deal and often," replied Madeleine.

"So my health really interests you?" said she to me.

Madeleine, astonished at the deep irony with which the words were spoken, looked at us by turns; my eyes were counting the pink flowers on the cushions of the gray and green furniture in the room.

"The situation is intolerable!" I said in her ear.

"Is it of my making?" she asked. "My dear boy," she said aloud, affecting the cruel cheerfulness with which women give lightness to revenge, "do you know nothing of modern history? Are not France and England always foes? Why,

Madeleine knows that; she knows that they are divided by a vast sea, a cold sea, a stormy sea."

The vases on the mantel had been replaced by candelabra, no doubt to deprive me of the pleasure of filling them with flowers; I found them at a later day in her room. When my servant arrived, I went out to give my orders; he had brought me a few things that I wished to carry up to my room.

"Félix," said the Countess, "make no mistake! My aunt's old room is Madeleine's now. Yours is over the Count's."

Guilty as I was, I had a heart, and all the speeches were poniard thrusts coldly directed to the tenderest spots, which they seemed chosen to hit. Mental suffering is not a fixed quantity; it is in proportion to the sensitiveness of the soul, and the Countess had bitterly gone through the whole scale of anguish; but for this very reason the best woman will always be cruel in proportion to what her kindness has been. I looked at her, but she kept her head down.

I went up to my new room, which was pretty—white and green. There I melted into tears. Henriette heard me; she came in, bringing me a bunch of flowers.

"Henriette," said I, "have you come to such a point that you cannot forgive the most excusable fault?"

"Never call me Henriette," she said. "She has ceased to exist, poor woman; but you will always find Madame de Mortsauf an attached friend who will listen to you and care for you. Félix, we will talk later. If you still have an affection for me let me get accustomed to see you, and as soon as words are a less heart-rending effort, as soon as I have recovered a little courage—then, and not till then. You see the valley?" and she pointed to the river. "It hurts me—but I love it still."

"Oh, perish England and all its women! I shall send in my resignation to the King. I will die here, forgiven!"

"No, no; love her—love that woman! Henriette is no more; this is no jest, as you will see!"

She left the room; the tone of her last speech showed how deeply she was wounded.

I hurried after her; I stopped her, saying—

"Then you no longer love me?"

"You have pained me more than all the others put together. To-day I am suffering less, and I love you less: but it is only in England that they say, 'Neither never nor for ever.' Here we only say, 'for ever.' Be good; do not add to my pain; and if you, too, are hurt, remember that I can still live on."

She withdrew her hand which I had taken; it was cold, inert, but clammy, and she was off like an arrow along the passage where this really tragical scene had taken place.

In the course of dinner the Count had a torture in store for me of which I had not dreamed.

"Then the Marchioness of Dudley is not in Paris?" he said.

I colored crimson and replied, "No."

"She is not at Tours," he went on.

"She is not divorced; she may go to England. Her husband would be delighted if she would return to him," I said excitedly.

"Has she any children?" asked Madame de Mortsauf in a husky voice.

"Two sons," said I.

"Where are they?"

"In England with their father."

"Now, Félix, be candid. Is she as lovely as people say?"

"Can you ask him such a question," cried the Countess. "Is not the woman a man loves always the most beautiful of her sex?"

"Yes, always," I replied with emphasis, and a flashing look that she could not meet.

"You are in luck," the Count went on. "Yes, you are a lucky rascal! Ah! when I was young my head would have been turned by such a conquest——"

"That is enough!" said Madame de Mortsauf, glancing from Madeleine to her father.

"I am not a boy," said the Count, who loved to think himself young again.

After dinner the Countess led the way down to the terrace, and when we there she exclaimed—

"What, there are women who can sacrifice their children for a man! Fortune and the world, yes—I understand that; eternity perhaps? But her children! To give up her children!"

"Yes, and such women would be glad to have more to sacrifice; they give everything——"

To the Countess the world seemed to be upside down; her ideas were in confusion. Startled by the magnitude of this idea, suspecting that happiness might justify this immolation, hearing within her the outcries of the rebellious flesh, she stood aghast, gazing at her spoilt life. Yes, she went through a minute of agonizing doubts. But she came out great and saintly, holding her head high.

"Love her truly, Félix; love that woman," she said with tears in her eyes. "She will be my happier sister. I forgive her the ill she has done me if she can give you what you could never have found here, what you could never find in me. You are right; I never told you that I could love you as you of the world love—and I never did love you so. Still, if she is not a true mother, how can she love?"

"Dear saint," said I, "I should have to be much less agitated than I now am to explain to you how victoriously you soar above her head; that she is a creature of earth, the daughter of a fallen race, while you are the daughter of heaven, the angel of my adoration; that you have my heart and she has only my body. She knows it; she is in despair over

it, and she would change places with you even if the cruelest martrydom were the price of the exchange.

"But all this is past remedy. Yours are my soul, my thoughts, my purest love, yours are my youth and my old age; hers are the desires and raptures of transient passion. You will fill my memory in all its extent; she will be utterly forgotten."

"Tell me, tell me—oh, tell me this, my dear!" She sat down on a bench and melted into tears. "Then virtue, Félix, a saintly life, motherly love, are not a mere blunder. Oh, pour that balm on my sorrows! Repeat those words which restore me to the bliss for which I hoped to strive in equal flight with you! Bless me with a sacred word, a look, and I can forgive you the misery I have endured these two months past."

"Henriette, there are mysteries in a man's life of which you know nothing. When I met you, I was at an age when sentiment can smother the cravings of our nature; still several scenes, of which the memory will warm me in the hour of death, must have shown you that I had almost outlived that stage, and it was your unfailing triumph that you could prolong its mute delights. Love without possession is upheld by the very exasperation of hope; but a moment comes when every feeling is pure suffering to us who are not in any respect like you. A power is ours which we cannot abdicate, or we are not men. The heart, bereft of the nourishment it needs, feeds on itself and sinks into exhaustion, which is not death but which leads to it. Nature cannot be persistently cheated, at the least accident it asserts itself with a vehemence akin to madness.

"No, I did not love, I thirsted in the desert!"

"In the desert!" she bitterly echoed, pointing to the valley. "And how he argues," she went on; "what subtle distinctions. Believers have not so much wit!"

"Henriette," said I, "do not let us quarrel for the sake

of a few overbold expressions. My soul has never wavered, but I was no longer master of my senses. That woman knows that you are the only one I love. She plays a secondary part in my life; she knows it, and is resigned. I have a right to desert her as we desert a courtesan."

"What then?"

"She says she shall kill herself," said I, thinking that this resolution would startle Henriette.

But as she heard me, she gave one of those scornful smiles that are even more expressive than the ideas they represent. "My dearest conscience," I went on, "if you gave me credit for my resistance and for the temptations that led to my ruin, you would understand this fated——"

"Yes, fated!" she exclaimed; "I believed in you too completely. I fancied you would never lack the virtue a priest can practice, and—Monsieur de Mortsauf!" she added, with satirical emphasis.

"It is all over," she went on, after a pause. "I owe much to you, my friend; you have extinguished the light of earthly life in me. The hardest part of the road is past; I am growing old, I am often ailing, almost invalided. I could never be the glittering fairy, showering favors on you. Be faithful to Lady Arabella. And Madeleine, whom I was bringing up so well for you, whose will she be? Poor Madeleine, poor Madeleine!" she repeated, like a sorrowful burthen. "If you could have heard her say, 'Mother, you are not nice to Félix.' Sweet creature!"

She looked at me in the mild rays of the setting sun that slanted through the foliage; and, filled with some mysterious pity for the ruin of us both, she looked back on our chastened past, giving herself up to reminiscences that were mutual. We took up the thread of our memories, our eyes went from the valley to the vineyard, from the windows of Clochegourde to Frapesle, filling our day-dream with the perfumes of our nosegays, the romance of our hopes. It was her last piece

of self-indulgence, enjoyed with the guilelessness of a Christian soul. The scene, to us so full of meaning, had plunged us both into melancholy. She believed my words, and felt herself in the heaven where I had placed her.

"My friend," exclaimed she, "I submit to God, for His hand is in all this."

It was not till later that I understood all the deep meaning of this speech.

We slowly went back by the terraces. She took my arm and leaned on me, resigned, bleeding, but having bound up her wounds.

"This is human life," she said. "What had Monsieur de Mortsauf done to deserve his fate? All this proves the existence of another world. Woe to those who complain of walking in the narrow way."

She went on to estimate the value of life, to contemplate it so profoundly in its various aspects, that her calm balance showed me what disgust had come over her of everything here below. As we reached the top steps she took her hand from my arm, and said these last words—

"Since God has given us the faculty and love of happiness, must He not take care of those innocent souls that have not known anything but affliction on earth? Either this is so, or there is no God, and our life is but a cruel jest."

With these words she hastily went indoors, and I found her presently lying on the sofa, stricken as though she had heard the Voice which confounded Saint Paul.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"I no longer know what virtue means," said she. "I have ceased to be conscious of my own."

We both remained petrified, listening to the echo of these words as to a stone flung into a chasm.

"If I have been mistaken in my life, it is she who is right —*she!*" added Madame de Mortsauf.

Thus her last indulgence had led to this last struggle.

When the Count came in, she, who never complained, said she felt ill; I implored her to define her pain, but she refused to say more and went to bed, leaving me a victim to remorse, one regret leading to another.

Madeleine went with her mother, and on the following day I heard from her that the Countess had had an attack of sickness, brought on, as she said, by the violent agitation she had gone through. And so I, who would have given my life for her, was killing her.

"My dear Count," said I to Monsieur de Mortsauf, who insisted on my playing backgammon, "I think the Countess is very seriously ill; there is yet time to save her. Send for Origet, and entreat her to follow his orders——"

"Origet! Who killed me!" cried he, interrupting me. "No, no. I will consult Charbonneau."

All through that week, especially during the first day or two, everything was torture to me, an incipient paralysis of the heart, wounded vanity, a wounded soul. Until one has been the centre of everything, of every look and sigh, the vital principle, the focus from which others derived their light, one cannot know how horrible a void can be. The same things were there, but the spirit that animated them was extinct, like a flame that is blown out. I understood now the frightful necessity lovers feel never to meet again when love is dead. Think what it is to be nobody where one has reigned supreme, to find the cold silence of death where the glad days of life had glowed. Such comparisons are crushing. I soon began even to regret the miserable ignorance of every joy that had blighted my youth. My despair was so overpowering, indeed, that the Countess was touched, I certainly believe.

One day, after dinner, when we were all walking by the river, I made a final effort to gain forgiveness. I begged Jacques to take his sister a little way in front; I left the

Count to himself, and taking Madame Mortsauf down to the punt:

"Henriette," I said, "one word of mercy, or I will throw myself into the Indre! I fell, it is true; but am I not like a dog in my devoted attachment? I come back as he does, like him full of shame; if he does wrong he is punished, but he adores the hand that strikes him; scourge me, but give me back your heart."

"Poor boy," said she. "Are you not as much as ever my son?"

She took my arm and slowly rejoined Jacques and Madeleine with whom she went homeward, leaving me to the Count, who began to talk politics apropos to his neighbors.

"Let us go in," I said, "you are bareheaded, and the evening dew may do you some harm."

"You can pity me—you, my dear Félix!" replied he, misapprehending my intentions. "My wife never will comfort me—on principle perhaps."

Never of old would she have left me alone with her husband; now I had to find excuses for being with her. She was with the children explaining the rules of backgammon to Jacques.

"There," said the Count, always jealous of the affection she gave to her two children; "there, it is for them that I am persistently neglected. Husbands, my dear Félix, go to the wall; the most virtuous woman on earth finds a way of satisfying her craving to steal the affection due to her husband."

She still caressed the children, making no reply.

"Jacques," said he, "come here."

Jacques made some difficulty.

"Your father wants you—go, my boy," said his mother, pushing him.

"They love me by order," said the old man, who sometimes perceived the position.

"Monsieur," said she, stroking Madeleine's smooth bands of hair again and again, "do not be unjust to us hapless wives; life is not always easy to bear, and perhaps a mother's children are her virtues!"

"My dear," said the Count, who was pleased to be logical, "what you say amounts to this: that, but for their children, women would have no virtue, but would leave their husbands in the lurch."

The Countess arose hastily and went out on to the steps with Madeleine.

"Such is marriage, my dear boy," said the Count. "Do you mean to imply by walking out of the room that I am talking nonsense?" he cried, taking Jacques' hand and following his wife, to whom he spoke with flashing looks of rage and fury.

"Not at all, monsieur, but you frightened me. Your remark wounded me terribly," she went on in a hollow voice, with the glance of a criminal at me. "If virtue does not consist in self-sacrifice for one's children and one's husband, what is virtue?"

"Self-sa-cri-fice!" echoed the Count, rapping out each syllable like a blow on his victim's heart. "What is it that you sacrifice to your children? What do you sacrifice to me? Whom? What? Answer—will you answer? What is going on then? What do you mean?"

"Monsieur," said she, "would you be content to be loved for God's sake, or to know that your wife was virtuous for virtue's sake?"

"Madame is right," said I, speaking in a tone of emotion that rang in the two hearts into which I cast my hopes for ever ruined, and which I stilled by the expression of the greatest grief of all, its hollow cry extinguishing the quarrel, as all is silence when a lion roars. "Yes, the noblest privilege conferred on us by reason is that we may dedicate our virtues to those beings whose happiness is of our making, and

whom we make happy not out of self-interest or sense of duty, but from involuntary and inexhaustible affection."

A tear glistened in Henriette's eye.

"And, my dear Count, if by chance a woman were involuntarily subjugated by some feeling alien to those imposed on her by society, you must confess that the more irresistible that feeling the more virtuous would she be in stifling it—in *sacrificing herself* to her children and her husband.

"This theory, however, is not applicable to me, since I unfortunately am an example to the contrary; nor to you, whom it can never concern."

A burning but clammy hand was laid on mine, and rested there, in silence.

"You have a noble soul, Félix," said the Count, putting his arm not ungraciously round his wife's waist, and drawing her to him, as he said: "Forgive me, my dear—a poor invalid who longs to be loved more, no doubt, than he deserves."

"Some hearts are all generosity," said she, leaning her head on the Count's shoulder, and he took the speech for himself.

The mistake caused some strange revulsion in the Countess. She shuddered, her comb fell out, her hair fell down, and she turned pale; her husband, who was supporting her, gave a deep groan as he saw her faint away. He took her up as he might have taken his daughter, and carried her on to the sofa in the drawing-room, where we stood beside her. Henriette kept my hand in hers as if to say that we alone knew the secret of this scene, apparently so simple, but so terribly heart-rending for her.

"I was wrong," she said in a low voice, at a moment when the Count had gone to fetch a glass of orange-flower water. "A thousand times wrong in treating you so as to drive you to despair when I ought to have admitted you to mercy. My dear, you are adorably kind; I alone can know how kind.

Yes, I know, some forms of kindness are inspired by passion. Men have many ways of being kind—from disdain, from impulse, from self-interest, from indolence of temper; but you, my friend, have been simply, absolutely kind."

"If so," I said, "remember that all that is great in me comes from you. Do you not know that I am wholly what you have made me?"

"Such a speech is enough for a woman's happiness," she answered, just as the Count came in. "I am better," said she, rising. "I want some fresh air."

We all went down to the terrace, now scented by the acacias still in bloom. She had taken my right arm and pressed it to her heart, thus expressing her painful thoughts; but, to use her own words, it was a pain she loved. She wished, no doubt, to be alone with me; but her imagination, unpracticed in woman's wiles, suggested no reason for dismissing the children and her husband; so we talked of indifferent matters while she racked her brain trying to find a moment when she could at last pour out her heart into mine.

"It is a very long time since I took a drive," said she at length, seeing the evening so fine. "Will you give the orders, monsieur, that I may make a little round?"

She knew no explanation was possible before prayer-time, and feared that the Count would want a game of backgammon. She might indeed come out here again, on this sheltered terrace, after the Count was gone to bed; but perhaps she was afraid to linger under these boughs through which the light fell with such a voluptuous play, or to walk by the parapet whence our eyes could trace the course of the Indre through the meadows. Just as a cathedral, with its gloomy and silent vault suggests prayer, so does foliage spangled by moonlight, perfumed with piercing scents, and alive with the mysterious sounds of spring, stir every fibre and relax the will. The country, which calms an old man's passions, fires those of youthful hearts—and we knew it.

Two peals of a bell called us to prayers. The Countess started.

"My dear Henriette, what ails you?"

"Henriette is no more," said she. "Do not call her back to life again; she was exacting and capricious. Now you have a friend whose virtue is confirmed by the words which heaven must have dictated to you. We will speak of this later. Let us be punctual for prayers. It is my turn to read them to-day."

When the Countess used the words in which she besought God to preserve us against all the adversities of life, she gave them an emphasis which I was not alone in noticing; she seemed to have used her gift of second-sight to discern the dreadful agitation she was fated to go through in consequence of my clumsiness in forgetting my agreement with Arabella.

"We have time to play three hits while the horses are put in," said the Count, leading me off to the drawing-room. "Then you will drive with my wife. I shall go to bed."

Like all our games, this one was stormy. From her own room or Madeleine's the Countess could hear her husband's voice.

"You make a strange misuse of hospitality," she said to her husband when she came back to the room.

I looked at her in bewilderment; I could not get used to her sternness; in former times she would never have tried to shield me from the Count's tyranny; she had liked to see me sharing her penalties and enduring them patiently for love of her.

"I would give my life," said I in her ear, "to hear you murmur once more—*Poor dear, poor dear!*"

She looked down, recalling the occasion to which I alluded; her eyes turned on me with a sidelong glance, and expressed the joy of a woman who sees the most fugitive accents of her heart more highly prized than the deepest delights of any other love.

Then, as ever when she had done me such an injustice, I forgave her, feeling that she understood me. The Count was losing; he said he was tired, to break off the game, and we went to walk around the lawn while waiting for the carriage. No sooner had he left us than my face beamed so vividly with gladness that the Countess questioned me by a look of surprise and inquiry.

"Henriette still lives," I said; "I still am loved! You wound me with too evident intention to break my heart; I may yet be happy."

"There was but a shred of the woman left," she said, in terror, "and you at this moment have it in your grasp. God be praised! He gives me the strength to endure the martyrdom I have deserved. Yes, I still love; I was near falling; the Englishwoman throws a light into the gulf."

We got into the carriage, and the coachman waited for orders.

"Go by the avenue to the Chinon road, and come home by the Landes de Charlemagne and the Saché road."

"What is to-day?" I asked too eagerly.

"Saturday."

"Then do not drive that way, madame; on Saturday evenings the road is crowded with noisy bumpkins going to Tours, and we shall meet their carts."

"Do as I say," said the Countess to the coachman, with emphasis.

We knew each other too well, and every inflection of tone, endless as they were, to disguise the most trifling feeling. Henriette had understood everything.

"You did not think of the country bumpkins when you chose this evening," she remarked, with a faint tinge of irony. "Lady Dudley is at Tours. Tell no falsehoods; she is waiting for you near here. What day is it—bumpkins—carts!" she went on. "Did you ever make such remarks when we used to go out together?"

"They prove that I have forgotten all about Clochegourde," I replied, simply.

"She is waiting for you?"

"Yes."

"At what hour?"

"Between eleven and midnight."

"Where?"

"On the Landes."

"Do not deceive me. Not under the walnut tree?"

"On the Landes."

"We will be there," she said. "I shall see her."

On hearing these words I regarded my fate as definitely settled. I determined to marry Lady Dudley and so put an end to the dreadful conflict which really threatened to exhaust my nerves, and to destroy by such constant friction the delicate pleasures which are like the bloom on a fruit. My savage silence wounded the Countess, whose magnanimity was not yet fully known to me.

"Do not be provoked with me, dear," she said in her golden tones. "This is my penance. You will never find such love as lies here," and she placed her hand on her heart. "Did I not confess to you that the Marchioness of Dudley has saved me? The stain is hers; I do not envy her. Mine is the glorious love of the angels! Since you came I have traveled over a vast extent of country; I have pronounced judgment on life. Uplift the soul and you rend it; the higher you rise the less sympathy you find; instead of suffering in the valley you suffer in the air, like an eagle soaring up and bearing in his heart an arrow shot by some clumsy shepherd. I know now that heaven and earth are incompatible. Yes, and for those who can dwell in the celestial zone God alone is possible. Then our soul must be detached from all things earthly.

"We must love our friends as we love our children—for their sake, not for our own. We are ourselves the source of

our woes and griefs. My heart will rise higher than the eagle soars; there is a love which will never fail me.

"As to living the life of this earth, it hinders us too much by making the selfishness of the senses predominate over the spirituality of the angel that is in us. The joys we get from passion are horribly stormy, and paid for by enervating fears that break the springs of the soul.

"I have stood on the shore of the sea where these tempests roar, I have seen them too near; they have caught me in their clouds; the wave did not always break at my feet, I have felt its rough embrace freezing my heart; I must retire to the heights, I should perish on the strand of that vast ocean. In you, as in all who have brought me sorrow, I see a guardian of my virtue. My life has been mingled with anguish, happily in proportion to my strength, and has been there preserved pure from evil passions, finding no beguiling repose, but always ready for God.

"Our attachment was the insane attempt, the hopeless effort, of two guileless children who tried to satisfy at once their own hearts, man, and God. Folly, Félix! Ah!" she asked, after a pause, "what does that woman call you?"

"Amédée," said I. "Félix is another creature, who can never be known to any one but you."

"Henriette dies hard," she replied, with a faint, pious smile. "But she will die," she went on, "in the first effort of the humble Christian, the proud mother, the woman whose virtues, tottering yesterday, are confirmed to-day.

"What can I say? Yes, yes, my life has been uniform in its greatest as in its least circumstances. The heart to which the first rootlets of affection ought to have attached themselves—my mother's heart—was closed to me, in spite of my persistently seeking a cranny into which I could steal. I was a girl, the last child after the death of three boys, and I vainly strove to fill their place in my parents' affections; I could not heal the wound inflicted on the family pride. When having

gotten through that melancholy childhood I knew my adorable aunt, death soon snatched her from me. Monsieur de Mortsauf, to whom I devoted my life, struck me persistently without respite—without knowing it, poor man! His love is full of the artless selfishness of our children's love. He knows nothing of the pangs he causes me; he is always forgiven.

"My children, my darling children, flesh of my flesh in all their sufferings, soul of my soul in their characters, like me in nature, in their innocent joys—were not those children given to me to show how much strength and patience there is in mothers? Oh, yes, my children are my virtues! You know whether I have been scourged by them, through them, in spite of them. To be a mother was to me to purchase the right of perpetual suffering.

"When Hagar cried in the desert an angel made a font of pure water spring for that too well-beloved slave. But when the limpid brook to which you desired to lead me, do you remember? flowed round Clochegourde, for me it ran with bitter waters. Yes, you have brought incredible suffering on me. God will no doubt forgive one who has known affection only through suffering.

"Still, though the acutest anguish I have known has been brought upon me by you, perhaps I deserved it. God is not unjust. Yes, Félix, a kiss given by stealth is perhaps a crime; and perhaps I have paid thus dearly for the steps I have taken to get ahead of my husband and children when walking out in the evening, so as to be alone with memories and thoughts which were not given to them, since, while walking on in front, my soul was wedded to another! When the inmost self shrinks and shrivels, to fill only the spot offered to an embrace, that is perhaps a heinous crime! When a wife stoops that her husband's kiss may fall on her hair, so as to be entirely neutral, it is a crime! It is a crime to count on a future built up on death, a crime to dream of a future of

motherhood without terrors, of beautiful children playing in the evening with a father worshiped by all, under the softened gaze of a happy mother. Ah, I have sinned, I have sinned greatly! I have even found pleasure in the penance inflicted by the church, which insufficiently atoned for these faults to which the priest was surely too indulgent. But God, no doubt, has set retribution in the very heart of the sin itself, by making him for whom it was committed the instrument of His vengeance! Giving you my hair—was not that a promise? Why did I love to wear white? I fancied myself more like your lily; did you not see me for the first time in a white dress? Alas! And I have loved my children the less, for every ardent affection is stolen from those that are due. So you see, Félix, all suffering has a meaning. Strike me, strike me harder than Monsieur de Mortsauf and my children could.

"That woman is an instrument of God's wrath; I can meet her without hatred. I will smile on her; I must love her or I am neither a Christian, a wife, nor a mother. If, as you say, I have helped to preserve your heart from the contact of what might have soiled it, the Englishwoman cannot hate me. A woman must love the mother of the man she loves; and I am your mother.

"What did I look for in your heart? The place left empty by Madame de Vandenesse. Oh, yes; for you have always complained of my coldness! Yes, I am indeed no more than your mother. Forgive me for all I said to you when you arrived, for a mother ought to rejoice to know that her son is so much loved."

She leaned her head on my bosom and repeated—

"Forgive, forgive!"

The accent of her voice was new to me. It was not her girlish voice with its gleeful intonation; nor her wifely voice with its imperative fall; nor the sighing of a grieving mother. It was a heart-rending voice, a new tone for new sorrows.

"As for you, Félix," she went on, with more animation, "you are the friend who can do no wrong. You have lost nothing in my heart; do not blame yourself, feel not the slightest remorse. Was it not the height of selfishness to ask you to sacrifice to an impossible future the most stupendous pleasure, since a woman can abandon her children for its sake, abdicate her rank, and renounce eternity! How often have I seen you my superior! You were lofty and noble, I was mean and sinful!

"Well, well, all is said. I can never be anything to you but a far-away light, high up, sparkling, cold, but unchanging. Only, Félix, do not let me be alone in loving the brother I have chosen. Love me too. A sister's love has no bitter morrow, no perverse moods. You need never be untrue to the indulgent soul that will live in your beautiful life, will never fail to weep over your sorrows, and be glad over your joys, that will love the women who make you happy, and be indignant if you are betrayed. I have never had a brother to love so. Be magnanimous enough to cast off all pride and solve all the difficulties of our attachment, hitherto so ill-defined and stormy, by this sweet and holy affection. I can still live on those terms. I will be the first to shake hands with Lady Dudley."

She shed no tears, alas, as she spoke these words full of bitter experience, while, by snatching away the last veil that hid her soul and her sufferings from me, they showed me by how many links she was bound to me and what strong chains I had broken through.

We were in such a delirium of agitation that we did not observe that it was raining in torrents.

"Will Madame la Comtesse take shelter here for a few minutes?" said the coachman, pointing to the principal inn of Ballan.

She nodded consent and we sat for about half an hour

under the archway of the entrance, to the great astonishment of the people of the inn, who wondered why Madame de Mortsauf was driving about the country at eleven o'clock at night.

Was she going to Tours? Or on her way back?

When the storm was over, and the rain had settled into what is called in Touraine a *brouée*, a heavy mist which did not hinder the moon from silvering the upper strata as they were swept swiftly past by the higher currents of wind, the coachman went out and turned homeward, to my great joy.

"Go the way I told you," said the Countess gently.

So we took the road to the Landes de Charlemagne, and there the rain began again. Half-way across the sandy common I heard Lady Arabella's pet dog barking. A horse suddenly dashed out from under a clump of oaks, crossed the road at a bound, leaped the ditch made by the owners to show the boundary of each plot where the soil was considered worth cultivating, and Lady Dudley pulled up on the common to see the carriage pass.

"What joy thus to wait for one's child when it is not a sin!" said Henriette.

The dog's barking had told Lady Dudley that I was in the carriage; she thought, no doubt, that I had come to fetch her in it, in consequence of the bad weather. When we reached the spot where the Marchioness was waiting, she flew along the road with the skill in horsemanship for which she is noted and which Henriette admired as a marvel. Arabella, by way of a pet name, called me only by the last syllable of Amédée, pronouncing it in the English fashion, and on her lips the cry had a charm worthy of a fairy. She knew that I alone should understand her when she called "My Dee."

"It is he, madame," answered the Countess, looking, in the clear moonlight, at the whimsical personage whose eager face was strangely framed in long locks out of curl.

You know how swiftly women take stock of each other.

The Englishwoman recognized her rival, and was arrogantly English; she comprehended us in one flash of English scorn, and vanished on the heath with the rapidity of an arrow.

"Back to Clochegourde—fast," cried the Countess, to whom this ruthless glance was like an axe at her heart.

The coachman went back by the Chinon road, which was better than that by Saché. When the carriage was on the skirts of the common again we heard the mad gallop of Arabella's horse and her dog's footsteps. They were all three hurrying round the woods on the other side of the heath.

"She is going away; you have lost her forever!" said Henriette.

"Well," replied I, "let her go. She will not cost me a regret."

"Oh, poor woman!" cried the Countess, with compassionate horror. "But where is she going?"

"To La Grenadière, a little house near Saint-Cyr," said I.

"And she is going alone," said Henriette, in a tone which told me that all women make common cause in love and never desert each other.

As we turned into the Clochegourde avenue, Arabella's dog barked gleefully and ran on in front of the carriage.

"She is here before us!" cried the Countess. Then, after a pause, she added: "I never saw a finer woman. What a hand! What a figure! Her complexion shames the lily and her eyes flash like diamonds. But she rides too well; she must love to exert her strength; I fancy she is energetic and violent; then, too, she seems to me too defiant of conventionality, a woman who recognizes no law is apt to listen only to her own caprice. Those who are so anxious to shine, to be always moving, have not the gift of constancy. To my notions love needs greater quietude; I picture it to myself as an immense lake where the sounding-line finds no bottom, where the tempests may indeed be wild, but rare, and restricted within impassable bounds—where two beings dwell on an

island of flowers, far from the world whose luxury and display would repel them.

"But love must take the stamp of character. I am perhaps mistaken. If the elements of nature yield to the mould impressed by climate, why should it not be so with the feelings of individuals? Feelings, which as a whole obey a general law, no doubt differ in expression only. Each soul has its own modes. The Marchioness is a powerful woman who traverses distances and acts with the vigor of a man; jailers, wardens, and executioner must be killed to deliver her lover. Whereas certain women know no better than to love with all their soul; in danger they kneel down, pray, and die.

"Which of the two do you prefer? That is the whole question. Yes, the Marchioness loves you; she sacrifices so much for you! It is she, perhaps, who will love on when you have ceased to love her."

"Permit me, dear angel, to echo the question you asked the other day: How do you know these things?"

"Each form of suffering brings its lesson, and I have suffered in so many ways that my knowledge is vast."

My servant had heard the order given, and, expecting that we should return by the terraces, he held my horse in readiness, in the avenue. Arabella's dog had scented the horse, and his mistress, led by very legitimate curiosity, had followed it through the wood where she, no doubt, had been lurking.

"Go and make your peace," said Henriette, smiling, with no trace of melancholy. "Tell her how much she is mistaken as to my intentions. I wanted to show her all the value of the prize that has fallen to her; my heart has none but kindly feelings toward her—above all, neither anger nor scorn. Explain to her that I am her sister, and not her rival."

"I will not go!" cried I.

"Have you never experienced," said she, with the flashing pride of a martyr, "that certain forms of consideration may be an insult. Go—go!"

I went to join Lady Dudley and find out what humor she was in. "If only she might be angry and throw me over," thought I, "I would return to Clochegourde."

The dog led me to an oak tree from whence the Marchioness flew off, shouting to me, "Away, away!"

I had no choice but to follow her to Saint-Cyr, which we reached at midnight.

"The lady is in excellent health," said Arabella, as she dismounted.

Only those who have known her can conceive of the sarcasm implied in this observation drily flung at me in a tone that was meant to convey: "I should have died."

"I forbid you to cast any of your three-barbed witticisms at Madame de Mortsauf," I replied.

"And does it offend your grace when I remark on the perfect health enjoyed by one so dear to your precious heart? Frenchwomen, it is said, hate even their lovers' dogs; but in England we love everything that is dear to our sovereign lord, we hate what they hate, for we live in their very skin. Allow me then to be as fond of that lady as you are. Only, dear boy," said she, throwing her arms around me, all wet from the rain, "if you were faithless to me, I should neither stand up, nor lie down, nor ride in a carriage with menservants; neither drive through the Landes de Charlemagne, nor over the heaths of any country in the world, nor be in my bed, nor under the roof of my fathers. *I* should be no more.

"I was born in Lancashire, where women can die of love. To have owned you, and give you up? I will give you up to no power in the world, not even to death, for I would go with you!"

She took me into her room, where comfort already made its presence felt.

"Love her, my dear," said I warmly, "for she loves you, and not ironically but sincerely."

"Sincerely, child?" she said, unfastening her riding-habit.

With a lover's vanity, I tried to make this arrogant creature understand the sublimity of Henriette's character. While the maid, who did not know a word of French, was dressing her hair, I tried to describe Madame de Mortsauf, sketching her life, and repeating the generous thoughts suggested to her by a crisis in which all women are petty and spiteful. Though Arabella affected to pay not the slightest attention, she did not lose a word.

"I am delighted," said she when we were alone, "to know of your taste for this style of Christian conversation; there is on my estate a curate who has not his match in composing sermons, our laborers can understand them, so well is his prose adapted to his audience. I will write to-morrow to my father to dispatch this worthy by steamer, and you shall find him in Paris. When once you have heard him you will never want to listen to any one else, all the more so because he, too, enjoys perfect health. His moralizing will give you none of those shocks that end in tears; it flows without turmoil, like a limpid brook, and secures delightful slumbers. Every evening, if you like, you can satisfy your craving for sermons while digesting your dinner.

"English moralizing, my dear boy, is as superior to that of Tours as our cutlery, our plate, and our horses are superior to your knives and your animals. Do me the favor of hearing my curate—promise me. I am but a woman, my dearest; I know how to love, how to die for you, if you like; but I have not studied at Eton, nor at Oxford, nor at Edinburgh; I am neither doctor nor reverend; I cannot moralize for you, I am quite unfit for it and should be to the last degree clumsy if I attempted it.

"I do not complain of your taste; you might have far more degraded tastes than this, and I would try to accommodate myself to them; for I intend that you should find with me everything you like best—the pleasures of love, the pleasures of the table, the pleasures of church-going—good claret

and the Christian virtues. Would you like to see me in a hair-shirt this evening? That woman is happy indeed to be able to supply you with moralities! In what university do Frenchwomen take their degree? Poor me! I have nothing to give you but myself, I am only a slave——"

"Then why did you fly when I wanted to bring you two together?"

"Are you mad, my Dee? I would travel from Paris to Rome disguised as your footman, I would do the most preposterous things for you; but how could I stop to talk on the highroad to a woman who has not been introduced to me, and who was ready with a sermon under three heads? I can talk to peasants. I would ask a workman to share his loaf with me if I were hungry, I would give him a few guineas, and it would be all in order; but as to stopping a chaise—as highwaymen do in England—that is not included in my code of honor.

"My poor boy, all you know is how to love; and you do not know how to live? Beside, my angel, I am not yet made exactly in your image. I have no taste for moralities. However, to please you, I am capable of the greatest efforts. Come, say no more, I will set to work, I will try to preach. I will never allow myself to caress you without throwing in a text from the Bible."

She exerted all her power—used it, abused it, till she saw in my eyes the ardent look that always came into them when she began her enchantments. She triumphed completely, and I submissively agreed to set above the vain subtleties of the Catholic Church the magnanimity of the woman who wrecks herself, renounces all future hope and makes love her sole virtue.

"Does she love herself better than she loves you?" she asked. "Does she prefer to you something which is not you? How can a woman attach any importance to anything in herself beyond that with which you honor it? No woman, how-

ever great a moralist she may be, can be the equal of a man. Walk over us, kill us, never let us encumber your life. Our part is to die, yours to live great and supreme. In your hand is the poniard; we have only to love and forgive. Does the sun care about the midges that live in his beams, by his glow? They exist as long as they can, and when he disappears they die——"

"Or fly away," I put in.

"Or fly away," she replied, with an indifference that would have spurred any man determined to use the strange power she attributed to us. "Do you think it worthy of a woman to stuff a man with bread buttered with virtue to convince him that love and religion are incompatible? Am I then an infidel? A woman may yield or refuse; but to refuse and preach is to inflict a double penalty, which is against the law of every land. Now here you will have nothing but delicious sandwiches prepared by the hand of your humble servant Arabella, whose whole morality consists in inventing caresses such as no man has ever known, and which are suggested by the angels."

I know nothing so undoing as such banter in the hands of an Englishwoman; she throws into it the eloquent gravity, the pompous air of conviction under which the English cover the lofty imbecilities of their prejudiced views. French irony is like lace with which women dress out the pleasure they give and the disputes they invent; it is a trimming, and as graceful as their dress. But English "fun" is an acid so corrosive to those on whom it falls that it leaves them skeletons, picked and cleaned. A witty Englishwoman's tongue is like a tiger's, which strips off the flesh to the very bone, and all in play; mockery, that all-powerful weapon of the devil's, leaves a deadly poison in the wounds it reopens at will.

That night Arabella chose to exert her power like the Grand Turk, who, to show his skill, amuses himself with decapitating innocent persons.

"My angel," said she, when she had soothed me to the dozing condition in which everything is forgotten but a sense of happiness, "I have been moralizing too—I myself! I was wondering whether I am committing a crime in loving you, whether I was violating divine laws, and I decided that nothing could be more pious or more natural. Why should God create some beings more beautiful than others unless to show us that they are to be adored? The crime would not be to love you, for are you not an angel? That lady insults you by classing you with other men; the rules of morality do not apply to you; God has set you above them. Is not loving you rising to be nearer to Him? Can He be wroth with a poor woman for longing for things divine? Your large and radiant heart is so like the sky that I mistake it, as midges come to burn themselves in the lights at a festival! Are they to be punished for their mistake? Indeed, is it a mistake? Is it not too fervent a worship of light? They perish from too much piety—if, indeed, flinging one's self into the arms we love can be called perishing?

"I am weak enough to love you while that woman is strong enough to remain in her chapel! Do not frown on me. You think I condemn her? Nay, child! I delight in her morality, since it has led her to leave you free and so allowed me to win you and to keep you for ever—for you are mine for ever, are you not?"

"Yes."

"For ever and ever?"

"Yes."

"Then grant me a favor, my sultan. I alone have discerned all your value. She, you say, cultivates the land? I leave that to the farmers; I would rather cultivate your heart."

I have tried to recall all this chatter to give you a clear idea of this woman, to justify all I have said about her and to give you a clue to the catastrophe. But how am I to describe the

accompaniment to the sweet words you know so well—conceits only to be compared to the most extravagant fictions of our dreams; inventions sometimes reminding me of my nosegays: grace united to strength, tenderness and languid softness contrasting with volcanic eruptions of passions; the most elaborate modulations of music applied to the harmony of our delight, the most insinuating words graced with charming ideas, everything most poetical that wit can add to the pleasures of sense. She aimed at destroying the impression left on my heart by Henriette's chaste reserve, by the flashes of her own impetuous passion. The Marchioness had seen the Countess quite as well as Madame de Mortsauf had seen her. They had judged each other clearly. The elaborate attack planned by Arabella showed how great her fears had been and her secret admiration for her rival.

In the morning I found her with eyes full of tears; she had not slept.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"I am afraid my excess of love may militate against me," said she. "I give you all; she, cleverer than I, still has something for you to desire. If you prefer her, think no more of me; I will not bore you with my sufferings, my remorse, my sorrows—no, I will go to die far away from you, like a plant far from the life-giving sun."

She extracted from me such protestations as filled her with joy. What is to be said of a woman who weeps in the morning? A hard word then seems brutal. If she has not been denied over night, we must need tell lies in the morning, for the code of man makes such falsehood a duty.

"Well, then, I am happy," she said, wiping away her tears. "Go back to her; I do not wish to owe you to the vehemence of my love, but to your own free will. If you come back again I shall believe that you love me as much as I love you, which I had always thought impossible."

She managed to persuade me to return to Clochegourde.

How false the situation in which I should then find myself was not to be imagined by a man gorged with raptures. If I had refused to go to Clochegourde, Lady Arabella would have won the day at Henriette's expense. Arabella would then carry me off to Paris. Still, to go thither was to insult Madame de Mortsauf. In that case I should come back more certainly than ever to Arabella.

Has any woman forgiveness for such crimes of treason? Short of being an angel come down from heaven rather than a purified spirit about to attain to it, a loving woman would see her lover suffer any agony sooner than see him made happy by another. The more she loves, the more she will be hurt.

Thus regarded from both sides, my position, when I had once left Clochegourde to go to La Grenadière, was as fatal to my first true love as it was profitable to my chance passion. The Marchioness had foreseen it all with deep calculation. She confessed later that if Madame de Mortsauf had not met her on the heath she had intended to commit me by hanging about Clochegourde.

The instant I saw the Countess, whom I found pale and stricken, like a person who has endured intolerable insomnia, I exercised—not the tact—but the instinct which enables a still young and generous heart to appreciate the full bearing of actions that are criminal in the jurisprudence of noble souls though indifferent in the eyes of the vulgar. Suddenly, as a child that has gone down a steep while playing and plucking flowers sees, in terror, that he cannot go up it again, discerns no human ground but at an immeasurable distance, feels himself alone in the dark and hears savage howls, I perceived that a whole world lay between us. A loud cry went up in our souls, an echo, as it were, of the funereal *Consummatum est* which is pronounced in church on Good Friday, at the hour when the Saviour died—a dreadful scene which freezes

those young souls in which religion is their first love. Every illusion Henriette had known had died under one blow; her heart had gone through its passion. She whom pleasure had never involved in its deadening coils—could she suspect the joys of happy lovers that she refused to look at me? for she would not shed on my gaze the light which for six years had irradiated my life. She knew, then, that the source of the beams that shone from our eyes lay in our souls, for which they were as a pathway, leading from one to the other, so that they might visit, become one, separate, and play—like two confiding girls who have no secrets from each other. I was bitterly conscious of the sin of bringing under this roof, where caresses were unknown, a face on which the wings of enjoyment had shed their sparkling dust.

If, the day before, I had left Lady Dudley to go home alone; if I had come back to Clochegourde, where Henriette perhaps expected me; perhaps—well, perhaps, Madame de Mortsauf would not have behaved so strictly as my sister. She gave all her civilities the solemnity of exaggerated emphasis; she played her part to excess so as not to forget it. During breakfast she paid me a thousand little attentions, humiliating attentions; she made much of me like a sick man to be pitied.

"You were out betime," said the Count; "you must have a fine appetite, you whose digestion is not ruined."

This speech, which failed to bring the smile of a wily sister to the Countess' lips, put the crowning touch to the impossibility of my position. I could not be at Clochegourde by day and at Saint-Cyr by night. Arabella had counted on my sense of delicacy and Madame de Mortsauf's magnanimity.

All through that long day I felt the difficulty of becoming the friend of a woman one has long desired. This transition, simple enough when years have led up to it, in youth is a distemper. I was ashamed, I cursed all pleasure, I wished that Madame de Mortsauf would demand my blood! I could not

tear her rival to pieces before her eyes; she avoided mentioning her, and to speak ill of Arabella was a baseness which would have incurred the contempt of Henriette, herself noble and lofty to the inmost core. After five years of exquisite intimacy we did not know what to talk about; our words did not express our thoughts; we hid gnawing pangs, we to whom suffering had hitherto been a faithful interpreter. Henriette affected a cheerful air on my behalf and her own; but she was sad. Though she called herself my sister on every opportunity, and though she was a woman, she could find no subject to keep up the conversation and we sat for the most part in awkward silence. She added to my mental torment by affecting to think herself Lady Arabella's only victim.

"I am suffering more than you are," I said, at a moment when the sister spoke in a tone of very feminine irony.

"How can that be?" she returned, in the haughty voice a woman can put on when her feelings are underestimated.

"I have done all the wrong."

Then there was a moment when the Countess assumed a cold indifference that was too much for me. I determined to go.

That evening, on the terrace, I took leave of all the family together. They followed me to the lawn where my horse waited, pawing the ground. They stood out of the way. When I had taken the bridle, the Countess came up to me.

"Come, we will walk down the avenue alone," she said.

I gave her my arm, and we went out through the courtyards, walking slowly as if lingering over the sensation of moving together; we thus reached a clump of trees that screened a corner of the outer enclosure.

"Good-by, my friend," she exclaimed, stopping and throwing her arms around my neck with her head on my heart. "Good-by, we shall see each other no more. God has given me the melancholy power of looking into the future. Do you remember the panic that came over me that day when you

came back so handsome, so youthful; and when I saw you turn to quit me, just as to-day you are leaving Clochegourde for La Grenadière? Well, last night I was once more enabled to look forward to our destinies. My friend, we are speaking to each other for the last time. I can hardly say a few words to you even now, for not all of me speaks; death has already stricken something within me. You will have robbed my children of their mother—take her place! You can! Jacques and Madeleine love you already as though you had made them suffer!"

"Die?" cried I in alarm, as I looked at the dry flame in her glittering eyes, of which I can only give an idea to those whose dear ones have never been attacked by the dreadful malady by comparing her eyes with balls of tarnished silver. "Die! Henriette, I command you to live. You often used to require vows of me—now I, to-day, require one of you: swear to me that you will consult Origet and do exactly what he tells you."

"Then would you contend against the loving mercy of God?" she asked, interrupting me with a cry of despair, indignant at being misunderstood.

"Then you do not love me enough to obey me blindly in everything, as that miserable lady does?"

"Yes, yes; whatever you wish," she replied, urged by a jealousy which made her overleap in that instant the distance she had till now preserved.

"I stay here," I said, kissing her eyes.

Startled by this capitulation she escaped from my embrace and went to lean against a tree. Then she turned homeward, walking very fast without turning her head; I followed her, she was praying and weeping. When we reached the lawn I took her hand and kissed it respectfully. This unlooked-for surrender touched her heart.

"Yours, come what may," I ejaculated. "I love you as your aunt loved you."

She started and wrung my hand with the most fervent affection.

"One look," said I, "only one of your old looks!" And feeling my whole soul enlightened by the flashing glance she gave me, I cried, "The woman who gives herself wholly gives me less of life and spirit than I have now received! Henriette, you are the best beloved—the only love."

"I will live," she returned, "but you, too, must get well."

That gaze had effaced the impression of Arabella's sarcasms. Thus was I the plaything of the two irreconcilable passions I have described to you, and of which I felt the alternating influence. I loved an angel and a demon: two women equally lovely; one graced with all the virtues we torture out of hatred of our own defects, the other with all the vices we deify out of selfishness. As I rode down the avenue, turning around again and again to see Madame de Mortsauf leaning against a tree, her children standing by her and waving their handkerchiefs, I detected in my soul an impulse of pride at knowing myself to be the arbiter of two such noble destinies, the glory, on such different grounds, of two superior women, and at having inspired such passions that either of them would die if I failed her.

This brief but fatuous dream was severely punished, believe me. Some demon prompted me to wait with Arabella till a fit of despair or the Count's death should throw Henriette into my arms, since Henriette still loved me; her severity, her tears, her remorse, and her Christian resignation were the eloquent symptoms of a feeling which could no more be effaced from her heart than from my own. As I slowly walked my horse along the pretty avenue, making these reflections, I was not five-and-twenty, I was fifty. Does not a young man, even more than a woman, leap in a moment from thirty to sixty?

Though I could drive away these evil thoughts with a breath they haunted me, I must confess. Their source, perhaps, was at the Tuileries behind the panels of the royal cabinet. Who

could come unharmed under the tainting influence of Louis XVIII., who was wont to say that a man knows nothing of true passion till he is past maturity, since passion is never splendid and frenzied till there is some loss of power and each pleasure is like the gambler's last stake.

When I reached the end of the avenue I looked round once more, and in the twinkling of an eye I was back again, on seeing Henriette still standing there alone. I flew to bid her a last adieu, bathed in tears of expiation of which she knew not the secret. Sincere tears, shed, though I knew it not, on the sweet love that was for ever past, on the virgin emotions, the flowers of life that can never bloom again. Later in life a man can no longer give, he only receives; what he loves in his mistress is himself; whereas in youth he loves her in himself. Later, he inoculates the woman who loves him with his tastes, perhaps with his vices; whereas, in the early days, the woman he loves imparts her virtues, her refinement, invites him to what is beautiful by her smile and shows him what devotion means by her example.

Alas for the man who has not had his Henriette! Alas for him who has not met a Lady Dudley! If he marries, the second will fail to retain his wife, the first may perhaps be deserted by his mistress; happy is he who finds both in one woman; happy, Natalie, is the man you love!

On our return to Paris Arabella and I became more intimate; by small degrees we insensibly abrogated the laws of propriety to which I had subjected myself—laws whose observance often leads the world to overlook the false position to which Lady Dudley had committed herself. The world, which dearly loves to get behind the curtain of things, accepts them as soon as it knows the hidden secret. Lovers who are obliged to live in the world of fashion are always wrong to break down the barriers insisted on by the common law of drawing-rooms, wrong not to obey implicitly all the

conventions demanded by good manners; more for their own sake than for that of others. Distances to be traversed, superficial respect to be maintained, comedies to be played out, mystery to be kept up—all the strategy of a happy love-affair fills up life, revives desire and preserves the heart from the lassitude of habit. But a first passion, like a young man, is by nature profligate and cuts down its timber recklessly, instead of economizing its resources.

Arabella scorned such commonplace ideas and submitted to them only to please me. Like the destroyer who marks his prey beforehand to secure it, she hoped to compromise me in the eyes of all Paris so as to attach me to her permanently. She displayed every coquettish art to keep me at the house, for she was not satisfied with the elegant scandal which, for lack of evidence, countenanced nothing more than whisperings behind a fan. Seeing her so anxious to commit an imprudence which must definitely certify her position, how could I do otherwise than believe in her love?

Once involved in the beguilements of an illicit union I fell a prey to despair, for I saw my life cut out in antagonism to received ideas and to Henriette's injunctions. I lived, then, in the sort of frenzy which comes over a consumptive man, when, conscious of his approaching end, he will not allow his breathing to be sounded. There was one corner of my heart I could not look into without anguish; a spirit of vengeance was constantly suggesting ideas on which I dared not dwell.

My letters to Henriette painted this mental disorder, and caused her infinite pain.

"At the cost of so much lost treasure she had hoped I should at least be happy," she wrote, in the only reply I ever received.

And I was not happy! Dear Natalie, happiness can only be positive; it cannot endure comparisons. My first ardor expended, I could not help comparing these two women, a contrast I had not yet been capable of studying. In fact, any

great passion lies so heavily on our whole nature that, in the first instance, it levels all angles and fills up the ruts of habit which represent our good or evil qualities. But later, in lovers who are thoroughly accustomed to each other, the features of their moral physiognomy reappear; they judge each other calmly, and not unfrequently, in the course of this reaction of character on passion, antipathies are discovered which lead to the separations regarded by superficial minds as evidence of the inconstancy of the human heart.

This stage had begun for us. Less dazzled by her fascinations, and taking my pleasures retail, so to speak, I, half involuntarily perhaps, took stock of Lady Dudley to her disadvantage.

In the first place, I found her lacking in the mother-wit which distinguishes the Frenchwoman from all others and makes her the most delightful to love, as men have owned who have had opportunities for judging of the women of many lands. When a Frenchwoman loves she is metamorphosed; her much talked-of vanity is devoted to beautifying her love; she sacrifices her dangerous conceit and throws all her pretentiousness into the art of loving. She weds her lover's interests, his hatreds, his friendships; in one day she masters the experienced shrewdness of a man of business; she studies the law; she understands the machinery of credit and can seduce a banker's counting-house; reckless and prodigal, she will not make a single blunder or waste a single louis. She is at once mother, housekeeper, and physician; and to every fresh phase she gives a grace of delight that betrays infinite love in the most trifling details. She combines the special qualities which charm us in the women of various countries, giving unity to the compound by wit, the growth of France, which vivifies, sanctions, and justifies everything, lends variety, and redeems the monotony of a sentiment based on the present tense of a single verb.

The Frenchwoman loves once for all; without pause or

fatigue, at all hours, in public or alone; in public she finds a tone that argues to one ear only, her very silence speaks, and her eyes appeal to you without looking up; if speech and looks are alike prohibited she can use the sand under her feet to trace a thought in; alone she expresses her passion even in her sleep; in short, she bends the world to her love.

The Englishwoman, on the contrary, bends her love to the world. Accustomed by education to preserve the icy manners, the egotistic British mien of which I have told you, she opens and shuts her heart with the readiness of English-made machinery. She has an impenetrable mask which she takes on and off with phlegmatic coolness; as impassioned as an Italian when no eye can see, she turns coldly dignified as soon as the world looks on. Then the man she loves best on earth doubts his power as he meets the utterly passive countenance, the calm intonation, the perfect freedom of expression that an Englishwoman assumes as she comes out of her boudoir. At such a moment dissimulation becomes indifference; the Englishwoman has forgotten everything. Certainly, a woman who can throw off her love like a garment makes one think that she may change.

What storms toss the surges of the heart when they are stirred by wounded self-love, as we see a woman taking up her love, laying it down and returning to it, like a piece of needlework! Such women are too thoroughly mistresses of themselves to be wholly yours; they allow the world too much influence for your sovereignty to be undivided. In cases when a Frenchwoman comforts the sufferer by a look or betrays her annoyance at intrusion by some lively jest, the Englishwoman's silence is complete: it frets the soul and irritates the brain. These women are so accustomed to reign wherever they may be, that, to most of them, the omnipotence of fashion dominates even their pleasures.

Those who are excessive in prudery should be excessive in love; Englishwomen are so; they throw everything into form,

but the love of form does not, in them, produce a feeling for art; they may say what they will, Protestantism and Catholicism account for the differences which give to a Frenchwoman's spirit so great a superiority over the reasoned, calculating love of Englishwomen. Protestantism is skeptical, it examines and kills belief; it is the death of art and of love. Where the world rules the people of the world must obey; but those who know what passion means flee away; to them it is intolerable.

You may understand, then, how much my self-respect was wounded by discovering that Lady Dudley would not live without the world, and that these British transitions were habitual with her. They were not a necessity imposed on her by the world; no, she naturally showed herself under two aspects adverse to each other; when she loved it was with intoxication; no woman of any nationality could be compared with her, she was as good as a whole seraglio; but then a curtain fell on this fairy display and shut out even the remembrance of it. She would respond neither to a look nor a smile; she was neither mistress nor slave; she behaved like an ambassadress compelled to be precise in her phrases and demeanor; she put me out of patience with her calmness, outraged my heart by her primness; she thus stored up her love till it was required, instead of raising it to the ideal by enthusiasm. In which of the two women was I to believe?

I felt by a myriad pin-pricks the infinite difference that divided Henriette from Arabella. When Madame de Mortsauf left me for a few minutes she seemed to charge the air with the care of speaking of her; as she went away the sweep of her gown appealed to my eyes, as its rippling rustle came to my ear when she came back; there was infinite tenderness in the way her eyelids unfolded when she looked down; her voice, her musical voice, was a continual caress; her speech bore witness to an ever-present thought; she was always the same. She did not divide her soul between two atmospheres,

one burning and the other icy; in short, Madame de Mortsauf kept her wit and the bloom of her intelligence to express her feelings, she made herself fascinating to her children and to me by the ideas she uttered. Arabella's wit did not serve her to make life pleasant, she did not exert it for my benefit, it existed only by and for the world; it was purely satirical, she loved to rend and bite, not for the fun of it, but to gratify a craving. Madame de Mortsauf would have hidden her happiness from every eye; Lady Arabella wanted to show hers to all Paris, and yet with horrible dissimulation she maintained the proprieties even while riding with me in the Bois de Boulogne.

This mixture of ostentation and dignity, of love and coldness, was constantly chafing my soul that was at once virgin and impassioned, and as I was incapable of thus rushing from one mood to another my temper suffered; I was throbbing with love when she relapsed into conventional prudery. When I ventured to complain, not without the greatest deference, she turned her three-barbed tongue on me, mingling the rhodomontade of adoration with the English wit I have tried to describe. As soon as she found herself in antagonism to me she made a sport of wounding my heart and humiliating my mind, and moulded me like dough. To my remarks as to a medium to be observed in all things, she retorted by caricaturing my ideas and carrying them to extremes. If I reproached her for her conduct, she would ask me if I wanted her to embrace me under the eyes of all Paris—at the Italian opera—and she took the matter so seriously that I, knowing her mania for making herself talked about, quaked lest she should fulfill her words.

In spite of her real passion, I never felt in her anything sacred, reserved, and deep, as in Henriette; she was as insatiable as a sandy soil. Madame de Mortsauf was always composed; she felt my soul in an accent or a glance, while the Marchioness was never overpowered by a look, by a pres-

sure of the hand, or a murmured word. Nay, more, the happiness of yesterday was as nothing on the morrow. No proof of love ever surprised her; she had such a craving for excitement, turmoil, and show that nothing, I imagine, came up to her ideal in these points; hence her frenzied excesses of passion; it was for her own sake, not for mine, that she indulged her extravagant fancies.

Madame de Mortsauf's letter, the beacon that still shone on my path, and showed how the most virtuous wife can obey her genius as a Frenchwoman by proving her perpetual vigilance, her unfailing comprehension of all my vicissitudes—that letter must have enlightened you as to the care with which Henriette kept watch over my material interests, my political connections, my moral conquests and her intimate interest in my life in all permitted ways.

On all these points Lady Dudley affected the reserve of a mere acquaintance. She never inquired as to my doings, nor my aversions or friendships with men. Lavish for herself, without being generous, she decidedly made too little distinction between interest and love; whereas, without having tested her, I knew that, to spare me a regret, Henriette would have found for me what she would never have sought for herself. In one of those catastrophes which may befall the highest and the wealthiest—history has many instances—I should have taken counsel of Henriette, but I would have been dragged to prison rather than say a word to Lady Dudley.

So far the contrast is based on feelings, but it was equally great with regard to externals. In France luxury is the expression of the man, the reproduction of his ideas, of his personal poetry; it represents the character, and, between lovers, gives value to the most trifling attentions by drawing out the ruling idea of the one we love; but English luxury, which had bewitched me by its selectness and refinement, was as mechanical as the rest. Lady Dudley infused nothing of

herself into it; it was the work of her servants—bought, paid for. The thousand comforting attentions at Clochegourde were in Arabella's eyes the concern of the servants; each had his duty and special function. The choice of good footmen was her steward's business, just as if they were horses. This woman felt no attachment to those about her; the death of the best of them would not have affected her; another, equally well trained, was to be had for money. As to her fellows, I never saw a tear in her eye for the woes of others; indeed, there was a frank selfishness about her which it was impossible not to laugh at.

The crimson robe of a great lady covered this iron soul. The exquisite *almée* who, in the evening, lounged on her rugs and rang all the tinkling bells of amorous folly, could quickly reconcile a young man to the hard and unfeeling Englishwoman; indeed, it was only step by step that I discerned the volcanic rock on which I was wasting my labors, since it could never yield a harvest.

Madame de Mortsauf had read this nature at a glance in their brief meeting; I remembered her prophetic words. Henriette was right throughout: Arabella's love was becoming intolerable. I have since noticed that women who ride well are never tender; like the Amazons they have lost a breast, and their hearts are petrified in one spot, I know not which.

Just when I was beginning to feel the weight of this yoke, when weariness was stealing over me, body and soul, when I understood how great a sanctity true feeling can give to love, and when the memories of Clochegourde were too much for me as, in spite of the distance, I smelt the perfume of its roses, heard the song of its nightingales—at the moment when I first perceived the stony bed of the torrent under its diminished flood—I had a blow which still echoes in my life, for it is repeated every hour.

I was writing in the King's private room; he was to go out

at four o'clock; the Duc de Lenoncourt was in waiting. As he came into the room the King asked for news of the Countess. I looked up hastily with a too significant gesture, and the King, startled by my eagerness, gave me the look which commonly introduced the stern words he could speak on occasion.

"Sire, my poor daughter is dying," replied the Duke.

"Will your majesty condescend to grant me leave of absence?" said I, with tears in my eyes, and risking an outburst of wrath.

"Fly, *my lord!*" replied he, smiling at the irony he had infused into the words, and letting me off a reprimand in honor of his own wit.

The Duke, more a courtier than a father, asked for no leave, but got into the carriage with the King. I went off, without saying good-by to Lady Dudley, who by good luck was not at home, and for whom I left a note saying that I was called away on the King's service. At La Croix de Berny I met his majesty returning from Verrières. As he accepted a bouquet which he dropped at his feet, the King gave me a look full of the royal irony that is so crushingly piercing, and which was as much as to say: "If you mean to become a somebody in political life, come back. Do not amuse yourself with interviewing the dead!"

The Duke, from his carriage, waved me a melancholy signal with his hand.

The two gorgeous coaches, drawn by eight horses, the colonels in gold lace, the mounted escort, and the clouds of dust whirled swiftly past to cries of "Vive le roi!" (Long live the King!) And to me it was as though the court had trampled the body of Madame de Mortsauf under foot, with the indifference of nature herself to human disaster. Though he was an excellent good fellow, the Duke, I make no doubt, went off to play whist with MONSIEUR (the Dauphin) after the King had retired. As to the Duchess, it was she, and she

alone, who long since had dealt her daughter the first death-blow by telling her about Lady Dudley.

My hasty journey was like a dream, but it was the dream of the ruined gambler; I was in despair at having had no news. Had her confessor carried severity to the point of forbidding my entering Clochegourde? I accused Madeleine, Jacques, the Abbé de Dominis, everybody, even to Monsieur de Mortsauf.

After passing Tours, as I turned off to the bridges of Saint-Sauveur, to go down the road that leads to Poncher between poplars—those poplars I had admired when I set out in search of my unknown fair—I met Monsieur Origet. He guessed that I was going to Clochegourde, I guessed that he was coming from it; we stopped our chaises and got out, I to ask news and he to give it.

"Well," I asked, "how is Madame de Mortsauf?"

"I doubt if you will find her alive," said he. "She is enduring a terrible death from inanition. When she sent for me, in the month of June last, no medical power could control the malady; she had all the symptoms which Monsieur de Mortsauf must have described to you, since he fancied he was suffering from them. The Countess was no longer at the stage of a transient attack due to an internal disorder which medicine can deal with, and which may lead to an improved condition, nor was she suffering from a beginning of acute illness which may be cured in time; her disease had already reached a point at which our art is useless; it is the incurable result of some sorrow, as a mortal wound is the result of a poniard thrust. The malady is produced by the torpor of an organ as indispensable to life as the action of the heart. Grief had done the work of the dagger. Be under no mistake. What Madame de Mortsauf is dying of is some unconfessed sorrow."

"Unconfessed?" said I. "Her children have not been ill?"

"No," said he, looking at me with meaning. "And since she has been so seriously ill, Monsieur de Mortsauf has left her in peace. I can be of no further use; Monsieur Deslandes from Azay can do everything. There is no remedy, and her sufferings are terrible. Rich, young, handsome—and she is dying aged and pinched by hunger, for she will die of starvation. For the last forty days the stomach is closed, as it were, and rejects every kind of food in whatever form it is given."

Monsieur Origet pressed the hand I offered him; he had almost asked for it by a respectful movement.

"Courage, monsieur," said he, raising his eyes to heaven.

The words expressed compassion for the sorrow he supposed me to share equally with him; he had no suspicion of the poisoned dart they bore, like an arrow piercing my heart. I hastily got into my carriage again, promising the postillion a handsome reward if he made good haste.

In spite of my impatience, I fancied I had made the journey in only a few minutes, so much was I absorbed by the bitter reflections that crowded on my soul. "She is dying of grief—and yet her children are well! then I am the cause of her death!" My threatening conscience underwent one of those examinations which echo through life, and sometimes beyond it. How feeble, now impotent is human justice! It punishes none but visible crimes. Why death and disgrace to the assassin who kills with a single blow, who generally comes upon you in your sleep and leaves you to sleep for ever, or who strikes you unexpectedly and spares you the agony of death? Why a happy life and the world's respect for the murderer who pours venom drop by drop into the soul and undermines the body to destroy it? How many assassins go unpunished! What deference for superior lives! What an acquittal for the homicide caused by moral persecution!

Some unknown and avenging hand suddenly lifted the painted curtain that veils society. I saw a number of such victims, as well known to you as to me. Madame de Beau-

séant, who had set out, dying, for Normandy a few days before my departure; the Duchesse de Langeais compromised! Lady Brandon gone to Touraine to die in the humble dwelling where Lady Dudley had just spent a fortnight—killed—by what terrible disaster you know. Our age is full of events of the kind. Who does not know the story of the poor young wife who poisoned herself, overcome by such jealousy as perhaps was killing Madame de Mortsauf? Who has not shuddered at the fate of the charming girl dying, like a flower cankered by a gad-fly, after two years of married life, the victim of her guileless ignorance, the victim of a wretch with whom Ronquerolles, Montriveau, and de Marsay shake hands because he helps them in their political schemes? Has not Madame d'Aiglemont been on the very verge of the grave? Would she be alive now but for my brother's care?

Science is the world's accomplice in these crimes, for which there is no tribunal. No one, it would seem, ever dies of grief, or despair, or love, or hidden poverty, or hopes fruitlessly cherished, perpetually uprooted and replanted! The new nomenclature has ingenious words that account for everything: gastritis, pericarditis, the thousand feminine ailments of which the names are spoken in a whisper, are mere passports to the coffin on which hypocritical tears are shed, to be soon wiped away by the lawyer.

Is there behind all this woe some law of which we know nothing? Must the man who lives to a hundred ruthlessly strew the ground with the dead and see everything destroyed that he may live, just as the millionaire absorbs the efforts of a thousand minor industries? Is there a strong and venomous type of life which is fed on these sweet and gentle creatures? Good God! Was I then one of that race of tigers? Remorse clawed at my heart with burning fingers and tears ran down my cheeks as I turned into the avenue to Clochegourde, on a damp October morning that brought the dead leaves down from the poplars planted under Henriette's directions—that

D. Murray Smith

MADELEINE, JACQUES, AND THE ABBÉ DE DOMINIS ALL KNEELING AT THE FOOT OF A WOODEN CROSS.

avenue where I had seen her wave her handkerchief as though to call me back.

Was she still alive? Might I yet feel her two white hands laid on my prostrate head? In that moment I paid the price of every pleasure Arabella had given me, and I thought them dearly bought! I swore never to see her again and took an aversion for England. Though Lady Dudley is a distinct variety of the species, I involved every Englishwoman in the black cerecloth of my condemnation.

On entering the grounds I had another shock. I found Madeleine, Jacques, and the Abbé de Dominis all kneeling at the foot of a wooden cross that stood on the corner of a plot of ground which had been included in the park at the time when the gate was erected. Neither the Count nor the Countess had wished to remove it. I sprang out of the chaise, went up to them bathed in tears, my heart wrung at the sight of these two young things and the solemn priest beseeching God. The old huntsman was there, too, standing bareheaded a few paces away.

"Well, monsieur?" said I to the abbé as I kissed Madeleine and Jacques on the brow; but they gave me a cold glance and did not interrupt their prayers.

The abbé arose; I took his arm to lean on him, pleadingly asking him: "Is she still living?" He bent his head mildly and sadly.

"Speak, I entreat you, in the name of our Saviour's Passion! Why are you praying at the foot of this cross? Why are you here and not with her? Why are the children out in this cold morning? Tell me everything, that I may not blunder fatally in my ignorance."

"For some days past Madame la Comtesse will only see her children at fixed hours. Monsieur," he went on after a pause, "you may perhaps have to wait some hours before you can see Madame de Mortsauf: she is terribly altered! But it will be well to prepare her for the interview; you might

cause her some increase of suffering—as to death, it would be a mercy!"

I pressed the holy man's hand; his look and voice touched a wound without reopening it.

"We are all praying for her here," he went on, "for she, so saintly, so resigned, so fit to die, has for the last few days had a secret horror of death; she looks at us who are full of life with eyes in which, for the first time, there is an expression of gloom and envy. Her delusions are, I think, not so much the result of a fear of dying as of a sort of inward intoxication—the faded flowers of her youth rotting as they wither. Yes, the angel of evil is struggling with heaven for that beautiful soul. Madame is going through her agony in the garden; her tears mingle with the white roses that crowned her head as a daughter of Jephtha, though married, and that have fallen one by one.

"Wait a little while; do not let her see you yet; you will bring in the glitter of the court, she will see in your face a reflection of worldly enjoyments, and you will add to her regrets. Have pity on a weakness which God Himself forgave to His Son made man. Though what merit indeed should we have in triumphing where there was no adversary? Allow us, her director and myself, two old men whose ruins cannot offend her sight, to prepare her for this unlooked-for interview and emotions which the Abbé Birotteau had desired her to forego. But there is in the things of this world an invisible warp of celestial causation which a religious eye can discern, and, since you have come here, you have perhaps been guided by one of the stars which shine in the moral sphere and lead to the tomb as they did to the manger."

And then he told me, with the unctuous eloquence that falls on the spirit like dew, that for the last six months the Countess' sufferings had increased every day, in spite of all Origet could do for her. The doctor had come to Clochegourde every evening for two months, striving to snatch this

prey from death, for the Countess had said to him: "Save me!"

"But to cure the body the heart must be cured!" the old physician had one day exclaimed.

"As the malady increased the gentle creature's words became bitter," the Abbé de Dominis went on. "She cries out to earth to keep her, rather than to God to take her; then she repents of murmuring against the decrees of the Most High. These alternations rend her heart, and make the conflict terrible between body and soul. Often it is the body that conquers.

"'You have cost me dear!' she said one day to Madeleine and Jacques, sending them away from her bedside. But in the next breath, called back to God by seeing me, she spoke these angelic words to Mademoiselle Madeleine: 'The happiness of others becomes the joy of those who can no longer be happy.' And her accent was so pathetic that I felt my own eyes moisten. She falls, indeed, but each time she rises again nearer to heaven."

Struck by the successive messages sent to me by fate, all leading up, in this vast concert of woe, through mournful modulations, to the funereal theme, the great cry of dying love, I exclaimed—

"Then you do believe that this beautiful lily, cut off in its prime, will bloom again in heaven?"

"You left her as a flower," he replied, "but you will find her burnt, purified in the fire of sorrow, as pure as a diamond still lying hidden in rubbish. Yes, that brilliant spirit, that angelical star, will emerge glorified from the clouds about it, to pass into the realms of light."

Just as I pressed the hand of this apostolic man, my heart overpowered with gratitude, the Count's perfectly white head was seen outside the house, and he flew to meet me with a gesture of great surprise.

"She was right! Here he is. 'Félix, Félix, Félix!

Félix is come!' Madame de Mortsauf cried out. My dear fellow," he added, with looks distraught by terror, "death is here. Why did it not take an old lunatic like me, whom it had already laid hands on?"

I walked on to the house, summoning all my courage; but on the threshold of the long corridor through the house, from the lawn to the terrace steps, I was met by the Abbé Birotteau.

"Madame la Comtesse begs you will not go to her yet," said he.

Looking around me I saw the servants coming and going, all very busy, dizzy with grief, and evidently startled by the orders delivered to them through Manette.

"What is the matter?" said the Count, irritated by this bustle, not only from a dread of the terrible end, but as a consequence of his naturally petulant temper, which seemed to be worse than before.

"A sick woman's caprice," replied the abbé. "Madame la Comtesse does not choose to receive Monsieur le Vicomte in the state she is in. She talks of dressing. Why contradict her?"

Manette went to call Madeleine, and a few minutes later we saw her come out again from her mother's room. As we walked, all five of us—Jacques and his father, the two abbés and I—in perfect silence along the front to the lawn, we went beyond the house. I looked by turns at Montvazon and at Azay, contemplating the yellowing valley, in mourning as it seemed, and responding, as it ever did, to the feelings that agitated me.

I suddenly saw the dear "Mignonne" running to seek autumn flowers, gathering them to compose a nosegay, no doubt; and thinking of all that was conveyed by this reflection of my loving attentions, a strange, indescribable sensation came over me, I tottered, my eyes grew dim, and the two priests between whom I was walking carried me to the

low parapet of a terrace where I sat for some time, broken, as it were, but without entirely losing consciousness.

"Poor Félix!" said the Count. "She said you were not to be written to; she knows how much you love her!"

Though prepared to suffer, I had found myself too weak to bear a contemplation which summed up all my happy memories. "There," thought I to myself, "there lies the heath, as dry as a skeleton, in the gray daylight, and in the midst of it there used to be one lonely flowering shrub which, in my walks of old, I could never admire without a shudder of ill-omen, for it was the emblem of this dreadful day!"

Everything was dejected about the little mansion, formerly so lively, so busy. Everything mourned, everything spoke of despair and neglect. The paths were but half-raked, work begun had been left unfinished, the laborers stood idle, gazing at the house. Though the vintage was being gathered, there was no noise, no chatter of tongues. The vineyards seemed deserted, so profound was the silence.

We walked on, grief repressing commonplace words, but listening to the Count, the only one of us who could talk. Having said the things which his mechanical affection for his wife dictated, from sheer habit and tendency of mind, he began finding fault with the Countess. His wife had never chosen to take any care of herself nor to listen when he gave her good counsel; he had discerned the first symptoms of her illness, for he had studied them in himself, he had physicked and cured himself with no aid but that of a strictly regulated diet and the avoidance of any strong emotion. He could perfectly well have cured the Countess, but a husband cannot take on himself such a responsibility, especially when he is so unhappy as to find his experience treated with contempt. In spite of all he could say, the Countess had called in Origet for her adviser—Origet, who had so mismanaged him and was killing his wife! If the cause of this disease was excess of troubles, he certainly had been in a condition to develop

it, but what troubles could his wife have had? The Countess was quite happy, she had nothing to grieve or annoy her. Their fortune was assured, thanks to his care and his good management; he allowed Madame de Mortsauf to reign supreme at Clochegourde; their children—well brought up and in good health—caused them no further anxiety; what then could have brought on the malady?

And he mixed up the expression of his despair with the silliest accusations. Then, presently, recalled by some reminiscence to the admiration the noble creature deserved, tears started to his eyes so long since dried up.

Madeleine came to tell me that her mother was ready to see me. The Abbé Birotteau came with me. The grave little girl remained with her father, saying that her mother wished to see me alone, making it her excuse that the presence of several persons was too fatiguing. The solemnity of the moment gave me that strange sense of being hot within and cold on the surface that is so overwhelming on some great occasions in life. The Abbé Birotteau, one of the men whom God has marked for His own by clothing them in gentleness and simplicity and endowing them with patience and mercy, drew me aside.

"Monsieur," he said, "you must know that I have done all that was humanly possible to hinder this meeting between you. The salvation of that saint required it. I thought only of her, not of you. Now that you are going once more to see her, whose door ought to be held against you by angels, I must inform you that I intend to be present to protect her against you and perhaps against herself! Respect her feeble state. I ask you to be merciful, not as a priest, but as a humble friend of whom you knew not and who would fain save you from remorse.

"Our poor invalid is dying literally of hunger and thirst. Since the morning she has been suffering from the feverish

irritability that precedes that dreadful end, and I cannot tell you how sorely she regrets leaving life. The outcries of her rebellious flesh are buried in my heart where they wound still tender echoes; but Monsieur de Dominis and I have assumed this religious duty so as to conceal the spectacle of her mental agony from the noble family which has lost its morning and its evening star. For her husband, her children, her servants, all ask, 'Where is *she?*' so greatly is she changed.

"When she sees you her laments will begin afresh. Put from you the thoughts of the man of the world, forget all the vanities of the heart, be to her the advocate of heaven and not of the world. Do not suffer that saint to die in a moment of doubt, her last accents words of despair!"

I made no reply. My silence filled the poor priest with consternation. I saw, I heard, I walked, and yet I was no longer on the earth. The one thought, "What can have happened? In what state shall I find her that everybody takes such elaborate precautions?" gave rise to apprehensions all the more torturing because they were undefined. That thought summed up every possible sorrow.

We reached the door of her room, and the anxious priest opened it. I then saw Henriette, dressed in white, reclining on her little sofa in front of the fireplace; on the mantel were two vases filled with flowers; there were more flowers on a table in front of the window. The abbé's face, amazed at this unexpectedly festal sight and at the change in the room so suddenly restored to its original order, showed me that the dying woman had banished all the odious apparatus that surrounds a bed of sickness. She had exerted the last strength of a dying fever to dress her disordered room for the worthy reception of him whom she loved at this moment above all else.

Her haggard face, under a voluminous lace wrapper, had the greenish pallor of magnolia flowers when they first open, and looked like the first outline for a portrait of a head we

love sketched in chalk on yellow-white canvas ; but, to understand how deeply the vulture's talons clutched at my heart, picture this sketch with the eyes finished and full of life—hollow eyes, glittering with unwonted light in a colorless face. She no longer had the calm supremacy which she had derived from constant victory over her griefs. Her brow, the only part of her face that had preserved its fine proportions, expressed the aggressive audacity of suppressed craving and threats. In spite of the waxen hues of her drawn face, internal fires flashed forth with an effluence that resembled the quivering atmosphere over the fields on a hot day. Her hollow temples, her sunken cheeks, showed the bony structure of the face, and her white lips wore a smile that vaguely resembled the grin of a skull. Her gown, crossed over her bosom, betrayed how thin she had grown. The expression of her face plainly showed that she knew how much she was changed, and that it had brought her to despair. She was no longer the sportive Henriette, nor the sublime and saintly Madame de Mortsauf; but the nameless thing that Bossuet speaks of, struggling against annihilation, urged by hunger and cheated appetites, to a self-centred battle of life and death.

I sat down by her side and took her hand to kiss it ; it was burning and dry. She read my pained surprise in the very effort I made to conceal it. Her discolored lips were stretched over her ravenous teeth in an attempt at one of those forced smiles under which we disguise alike irony and vengeance, the anticipation of pleasure, ecstasy of soul, or the fury of disappointment.

"It is death, my poor Félix," she said ; "and death does not charm you ! Hideous death—death which every creature, even the boldest lover, holds in horror. Love ceases here ! I knew it full well. Lady Dudley will never see you shocked by such a change. Oh ! why have I so longed for you, Félix ? And at last you are here—and I reward your devo-

tion by the horrible spectacle which made the Comte de Rancé turn Trappist; I, who hoped to dwell in your remembrance beautiful, noble, like an immortal lily, I destroy all your illusions. True love makes no calculations.

"But do not fly: stay. Monsieur Origet thought me much better this morning; I shall live again—be renewed under your eyes. And then, when I shall have recovered my strength a little, when I can take some food, I shall grow handsome again. I am but five-and-thirty; I may have some years of beauty yet. Happiness renews youth, and I mean to be happy. I have made the most delightful plans. We will leave them all at Clochegourde and go to Italy together."

Tears rose to my eyes; I turned away to the table, as if to admire the flowers; the abbé hastily came up to me and leaned over the nosegay: "No tears," said he in a whisper.

"What, Henriette, have you ceased to love our dear valley?" said I, as an excuse for my sudden movement.

"No," she said, touching my forehead with her lips with coaxing softness; "but without you it is fatal to me—without thee (*sans toi*)," she corrected herself, touching my ear with her hot lips to breathe the two words like a sigh.

I was dismayed by this crazy caress, which gave weight to the terrible hints of the two priests. My first surprise passed off; but though I could now exercise my reason, my will was not strong enough to restrain the nervous excitement that tormented me during this scene. I listened without replying, or rather I replied by a fixed smile and nods of assent, merely not to contradict her, as a mother treats her child. After being startled by the change in her person, I perceived that the woman who had once been so dignified in her loftiness had now, in her attitude, her voice, her manners, her looks, and her ideas, the artless simplicity of a child, the ingenuous grace, the restless movements, the absolute indifference to everything that is not itself or the object of its desire, which, in a child, cry out for protection.

Is it always thus with the dying? Do they cast off every social disguise, as a child has not yet assumed them? Or was it that the Countess, on the brink of eternity, while rejecting every human emotion but love, expressed its sweet innocence after the manner of Chloe?

"You will bring me health as you used to do, Félix?" said she, "and my valley will be good to me again. How can I help eating anything you give me? You are such a good nurse! And, beside, you are so rich in health and strength that life is contagious from you.

"My dear, prove to me that I am not to die, and to die disappointed. They think that I suffer most from thirst. Oh, yes, I am very thirsty, my dear. It hurts me dreadfully to see the waters of the Indre; but my heart suffers a more burning thirst. I thirsted for you," she said in a smothered voice, taking my hands in her burning hands and drawing me toward her to speak the words in my ear. "My agony was that I could not see you. Did you not bid me live? I will live! I will ride—I, too, I will know everything—Paris, festivities, pleasures!"

Oh, Natalie! this dreadful outcry, which the materialism of the senses makes so cold at a distance, made our ears tingle—the old priest's and mine; the tones of that beautiful voice represented the struggles of a whole life, the anguish of a true love always balked. It was indescribable torture to me and grewsome to the abbé.

The Countess stood up with an impatient effort, like a child that wants a toy. When the confessor saw his penitent in this mood, the poor man fell on his knees, clasped his hands, and began to pray.

"Yes, I will live!" she cried, making me stand, too, and leaning on me; "live on realities and not on lies. My whole life has been one of lies; I have been counting them over these last days. Is it possible that I should die, I who have not lived! I who have never been to meet any one on

a heath?" She paused, seemed to listen, and smelt something through the very walls.

"Félix, the vintagers are going to dinner, and I, the mistress, am starving," she said in a childish tone. "It is the same with love; they are happy!"

"*Kyrie eleison!*" said the poor abbé, who, with clasped hands and eyes raised to heaven, was repeating litanies.

She threw her arms around my neck, clasping me with vehemence as she said—

"You shall escape me no more! I mean to be loved, I will be as mad as Lady Dudley, I will learn English to say *My Dee* very prettily." She gave me a little nod, as she had been wont to do when leaving me, to assure me that she would return immediately. "We will dine together," said she. "I will go and tell Manette——" But she stopped, overcome by weakness, and I laid her, dressed as she was, on her bed.

"Once before you carried me just so," she said, opening her eyes.

She was very light, but very hot; as I held her I felt her whole body burning. Monsieur Deslandes came in, and was astonished to find the room dressed out; on seeing me he understood everything.

"We suffer much before we die, monsieur," said she in a husky voice.

He sat down, felt her pulse, rose hastily, spoke a few words to the priest in an undertone, and left the room; I followed him.

"What are you going to do?" I asked him.

"To spare her intolerable torments," said he. "Who could have conceived of so much vitality? We cannot understand how she is still living. This is the forty-second day that the Countess has neither eaten, drunk, nor slept."

Monsieur Deslandes sent for Manette. The abbé led me into the gardens.

"Let us leave the doctor free," said he. "With Manette's help he will wrap her in opium. Well, you have heard her," he said, "if indeed it is she who yields to these mad impulses——"

"No," said I, "it is she no more."

I was stupefied with grief. As I walked on, every detail of this brief scene gained importance. I hastily went out of the little gate of the lower terrace and seated myself in the punt, where I ensconced myself to be left alone with my thoughts. I tried to tear myself away from the power by which I lived; a torture like that by which the Tartars were wont to punish adultery by wedging a limb of the guilty person into a cleft rock, and giving him a knife wherewith to free himself if he did not wish to starve; a fearful penance through which my soul was passing, since I had to amputate its nobler half. My life, too, was a failure!

Despair suggested strange ideas. Now, I would die with her; again, I would cloister myself at La Meilleraye where the Trappists had just established a retreat. My clouded eyes no longer saw external objects. I gazed at the windows of the room where Henriette lay suffering, fancying I saw the light that burned there that night when I had dedicated myself to her. Ought I not to have obeyed the simple rule of life she had laid down for me, preserving myself hers in the toil of business? Had she not enjoined on me to become a great man, so as to preserve myself from the base and degrading passions to which I had given way like every other man? Was not chastity a sublime distinction which I had failed to keep. Love, as Arabella conceived of it, suddenly filled me with disgust.

Just as I raised my stricken head, wondering whence henceforth I was to derive light and hope, a slight rustle disturbed the air; I looked toward the terrace and saw Madeleine slowly walking there, alone. While I made my way up to the terrace, intending to ask the dear child the reason of the cold

look she had given me at the foot of the cross, she had seated herself on the bench; as she saw me coming she arose, affecting not to have perceived me, so as not to be alone with me; her step was rapid and significant. She hated me. She was flying from her mother's murderer. Returning to the house up the flight of steps I saw Madeleine standing motionless, listening to my approach. Jacques was sitting on a step, and his attitude was expressive of the same insensibility as had struck me when we were walking together, leaving me possessed by such ideas as we bury in a corner of the soul to return to and examine later, at leisure. I have observed that all those who are doomed to die young are calmly indifferent to burials.

I wanted to question this melancholy soul. Had Madeleine kept her thoughts to herself, or had she communicated her hatred to Jacques?

"You know," said I, to open a conversation, "that you have in me a most devoted brother."

"Your friendship is worthless to me," said he. "I shall follow my mother," and he gave me a fierce look of suffering.

"Jacques!" I cried, "you too?"

He coughed and turned away; then when he came back he hastily showed me his bloodstained handkerchief.

"You understand?" he said.

Thus each had a secret. As I afterward saw, the brother and sister avoided each other. Henriette gone, everything at Clochegourde was falling into ruin.

"Madame is asleep," Manette came to tell us, happy to see the Countess reprieved from pain.

In such fearful moments, though everybody knows the inevitable end, true affection goes crazy and clings to the smallest joys. The minutes are ages which we would gladly make ages of ease. We wish that the sufferer might sleep in roses; we would take their pain if we could; we long that the last sigh should be unconsciously breathed.

"Monsieur Deslandes had the flowers removed; they were too much for madame's nerves," said Manette.

So it was the flowers that had made her delirious; she was not guilty. The loves of earthly creatures, the joys of fruitfulness, the yearnings of plants had intoxicated her with their fragrance, and had no doubt revived the thoughts of happy love that had slumbered within her from her youth.

"Come, Monsieur Félix," said Manette, "come and look at madame; she is as lovely as an angel."

I went back to the dying woman's room just as the setting sun was gilding the gabled roofs of the Château of Azay. All was still and clear. A softened light fell upon the bed where Henriette lay lapped in opium. At this moment the body was, so to speak, annihilated; the soul alone was seen in the face, as serene as a bright sky after a storm. Blanche and Henriette—the two beautiful aspects of the same woman—appeared before me, all the more beautiful because my memory, my mind, my imagination, helping nature, restored the perfection of each feature, to which the spirit triumphant lent fitful lights, coming and going and as she breathed.

The two priests sat at the foot of the bed. The Count stood thunderstruck, recognizing the banners of death floating above that adored head. I took a seat on the sofa she had been occupying. Then we four exchanged glances in which our admiration of her heavenly beauty mingled with tears of regret.

The gleam of intelligence announced the return of God to one of His loveliest tabernacles. The Abbé de Dominis and I communicated our mutual feelings by signs. Yes, the angels kept guard over Henriette! Yes, their swords flashed above that noble brow, where we now saw the august stamp of virtue which of old had made the soul visible, as it were, holding communion with the spirits of its own sphere. The lines of her face were purified, every feature grew grander and more majestic under the invisible censers of the seraphim that

watched over her. The green hues of physical torment gave way to the perfect whiteness, the dead, cold pallor of approaching death.

Jacques and Madeleine came in; Madeleine gave us all a thrill by the adoring impulse which made her fall on her knees by the bed, clasp her hands and utter the inspired exclamation: "At last! This is my mother!" Jacques was smiling: he knew that he was following his mother whither she was going.

"She is reaching the haven!" said the Abbé Birotteau.

The Abbé de Dominis looked at me, as much as to say: "Did I not tell you that the star would rise effulgent?"

Madeleine kept her eyes riveted on her mother, breathing with her breath, echoing her faint sighs, the last thread that held her to life, we counting them with dread lest it should break at each effort. Like an angel at the gates of the sanctuary the young girl was at once eager and calm, strong and prostrate.

At this moment the Angelus rang out from the village belfry; the waves of mellowed air brought up the sound in gusts, announcing that at this hour all Christendom was repeating the words spoken by the angel to the woman who made reparation for the sins of her sex. This evening the *Ave Maria* came to us as a greeting from heaven. The prophecy was so sure, the event so near, that we melted into tears.

The murmurous sounds of the evening—a melodious breeze in the leaves, the last twitter of the birds, the buzz and hum of insects, the voice of waters, the plaintive cry of the tree-frog—all the land was taking leave of the loveliest lily of this valley and her simple, rural life. The religious poetry of the scene, added to all this natural poetry, so well expressed a chant of departure that our sobs began again.

Though the bedroom door was open, we were so lost in this terrible contemplation, trying to stamp on our minds the memory of it for ever, that we did not observe all the ser-

vants of the house kneeling in a group outside and putting up fervent prayers. All these poor souls, accustomed to hope, had thought they should still keep their mistress, and these unmistakable signs overwhelmed them. At a sign from the Abbé Birotteau the old huntsman went to fetch the curé of Saché. The doctor, standing by the bed, as calm as science, holding his patient's torpid hand, had signed to the confessor to express that this sleep was the last hour of ease that was given to the recalled angel. The moment had come for administering the last sacraments of the church.

At nine o'clock she gently awoke and looked at us in mild surprise; we saw our idol in all the beauty of her best days.

"Mother, you are too beautiful to die; life and health are coming back to you!" cried Madeleine.

"My dear daughter, I shall live—but in you," said she, with a smile.

Then came heart-rending farewells from the mother to the children and from the children to the mother. Monsieur de Mortsauf kissed his wife piously on the brow. The Countess flushed as she saw me.

"Dear Félix," said she, "this is, I believe, the only grief I shall ever have given you! But forget all I may have said to you, poor crazed thing as I was!" She held out her hand; I took it to kiss, and she said with a smile of virtue—"As of old, Félix!"

We all left the room, and remained in the drawing-room while the sick woman made her last confession. I sat down next to Madeleine. In the presence of them all she could not avoid me without being rude; but, as her mother used, she looked at no one and kept silence, without once raising her eyes to mine.

"Dear Madeleine," said I in a low voice, "what grievance have you against me? Why such coldness when, in the presence of death, we ought to be friends?"

"I fancy I can hear what my mother is saying at this

moment," replied she, putting on the expression that Ingres had given to his "Mother of God," the mourning Virgin preparing to protect the world in which her Son is about to perish.

"Then you condemn me at the moment when your mother is absolving me, supposing me to be guilty."

"You, and always you!" She spoke with unreasoning hatred, like that of a Corsican, as implacable as all judgments are that are pronounced by those who, not knowing life, admit no extenuation of the sins committed against the laws of the heart.

An hour passed in utter silence. The Abbé Birotteau came in after hearing the Comtesse de Mortsauf's general confession, and we all went into her room again. Henriette, in obedience to one of the ideas that occur to noble souls, all sisters in purpose, had been robed in a long garment that was to serve as her winding-sheet. We found her sitting up in bed, beautiful with expiation and hope. I saw in the fireplace the black ashes of my letters which had just been burnt; a sacrifice she would not make, the confessor told me, till she was at the point of death. She smiled at us all—her old smile. Her eyes, moist with tears, were, we saw, finally unsealed; she already saw the celestial joys of the promised land.

"Dear Félix," she said, holding out her hand and pressing mine. "Stay. You must be present at one of the closing scenes of my life, which will not be one of the least painful of all, but in which you are intimately concerned."

She made a sign, and the door was shut. By her desire the Count sat down; the Abbé Birotteau and I remained standing. With Manette's assistance the Countess got up and knelt down before the astonished Count, insisting on remaining there. Then, when Manette had left the room, she raised her head, which she had bent, resting it on his knees.

"Though I have always been a faithful wife to you," said

she in a broken voice, "I have, perhaps, monsieur, failed in my duties. I have prayed to God to give me strength to ask your forgiveness of my faults. I have perhaps devoted to the cares of a friendship outside my home attentions more affectionate than I owed even to you. Perhaps I have annoyed you by the comparisons you may have drawn between those cares, those thoughts, and such as I have given to you. I have known," she said in a very low voice, "a great friendship, which no one, not even he who was its object, ever wholly knew. Though I have been virtuous by all human law, a blameless wife to you, thoughts—voluntary or involuntary—have found their way into my mind and I fear I may have cherished them too gladly. But as I have always loved you truly, and have been your obedient wife, as the clouds passing across the sky have never darkened its clearness, you behold me craving your blessing with an unsullied brow. I can die without a bitter pang if I may hear from your lips one loving word for your Blanche, the mother of your children, and if you will forgive all these things, which she did not forgive herself till she had received the absolution of the tribunal to which we all bow."

"Blanche, Blanche," cried the old man, suddenly bursting into tears over his wife's head, "do you want to kill me?"

He raised her in his arms with unwonted strength, and clasping her to him, "Have I no forgiveness to ask?" he went on. "Have I not often been harsh? Are you not magnifying a child's scruples?"

"Perhaps," she answered. "But be tender, my dear, to the weakness of the dying; soothe my soul. When you are in the hour of death you will remember that I blessed you as we parted.

"Will you allow me to leave to our friend here this pledge of deep regard?" said she, pointing to a letter on the chimney-shelf. "He is now my adopted son, nothing more. The

heart, my dear Count, has its bequests to make; my last words are to impress on our dear Félix certain duties to be carried out; I do not think I have expected too much of him —grant that I may not have expected too much of you in allowing myself to bequeath to him a few thoughts. I am still a woman," she said, bowing her head with sweet melancholy; "after being forgiven, I ask a favor. Read it, but not until after my death," she added, handing me the mysterious manuscript.

The Count saw his wife turn paler; he lifted her, and himself carried her to the bed, where we gathered round her.

"Felix," said she, "I may have done you some wrong. I may often have given you pain by leading you to hope for joys I dared not give; but is it not to my courage as a wife and as a mother that I owe the comfort of dying reconciled to you all? So you, too, will forgive me, you who have so often accused me, and whose injustice was a pleasure to me."

The Abbé Birotteau put his finger to his lips. At this hint the dying woman bowed her head; weakness was too much for her; she waved her hands to express that the priest, the children, and the servants were to be admitted; then, with a commanding gesture to me, she pointed to the Count, quite crushed, and her children as they entered. The sight of that father, whose insanity none knew save herself and me, the guardian now of these delicate creatures, inspired her with mute entreaties which fell on my soul like sacred fire. Before receiving extreme unction she begged pardon of her servants for being sometimes rough with them, she asked their prayers, and commended each separately to the Count. She nobly confessed that, during the past few months, she had uttered complaints little worthy of a Christian, which might have scandalized her dependents. She had been cold to her children, and had given way to unseemly sentiments; but she ascribed to her intolerable sufferings this want of submission to the will of God.

Finally, she publicly thanked the Abbé Birotteau, with touching and heartfelt effusiveness, for having shown her the vanity of all earthly things.

When she ceased speaking all began to pray, and the curé of Saché administered the viaticum. A few minutes later her breathing became difficult, a cloud dimmed her eyes, though she presently opened them again to give me a last look, and she died in the presence of us all, hearing perhaps the chorus of our sobs.

At the moment when she breathed her last sigh—the last pang of a life that was one long pain, I felt myself struck by a blow which paralyzed all my faculties.

The Count and I remained by the bed of death all night, with the two abbés and the curé, watching the dead by the light of the tapers, as she lay on the mattress, calm now, where she had suffered so much.

This was my first personal knowledge of death. I sat the whole night through, my eyes fixed on Henriette, fascinated by the pure expression given by the stilling of every tempest, by the pallor of the face in which I still read numberless affections, which could no longer respond to my love.

What majesty there is in that silence and coldness! How many reflections do they utter! What beauty in that perfect repose, what command in that motionless sleep! All the past is there, and the future has begun. Ah! I loved her as well in death as I had in life.

In the morning the Count went to bed, the three weary priests fell asleep at that hour of exhaustion, so well known to all who have watched through a night. And then, alone with her, I could, unseen, kiss her brow with all the love she had never allowed me to express.

On the next day but one, in a cool autumn morning, we followed the Countess to her last home. She was borne to the grave by the old huntsman, the two Martineaus, and Ma-

nette's husband. We went down the road I had so gleefully come up on the day when I returned to her. We crossed the valley of the Indre to reach the little graveyard of Saché—a humble village cemetery, lying at the back of the church on the brow of a hill, where she had desired to be buried, out of Christian humility, with a plain cross of black wood, like a poor laboring woman, as she had said.

When, from the middle of the valley, I caught sight of the village church and the graveyard, I was seized with a convulsive shudder. Alas! we each have a Golgotha in our life, where we leave our first three and thirty years, receiving then a spear-thrust in our heart, and feeling on our head a crown of thorns in the place of the crown of roses: this hill was to me the Mount of Expiation.

We were followed by an immense crowd that had collected to express the regrets of the whole valley where she had silently buried endless acts of benevolence. We knew from Manette, whom she trusted entirely, that she economized in dress to help the poor when her savings were insufficient. Naked children had been clothed, baby-linen supplied, mothers rescued, sacks of corn bought of the millers in winter for helpless old men, a cow bestowed on a poverty-stricken household; in short, all the good works of a Christian, a mother, a lady bountiful; and sums of money given to help loving couples to marry, or to provide substitutes for young men drawn by the conscription, touching gifts from the loving soul that had said: "The happiness of others becomes the joy of those who can no longer be happy."

These facts, talked over every evening for the last three days, had brought together a vast throng. I followed the bier with Jacques and the two abbés. According to custom neither Madeleine nor the Count were present; they remained alone at Clochegourde. Manette insisted on coming.

"Poor madame! poor madame! she is happy now!" I heard many times spoken through sobs.

At the moment when the procession turned off from the road to the hills there was a unanimous groan, mingled with weeping, that was enough to make one think that the valley had lost its soul.

The church was full of people. After the service we went to the cemetery where she was to be buried close to the cross. When I heard the stones and gravel rattle on the coffin my strength failed me. I had to ask the Martineaus to support me and they led me half-dead to the Château of Saché; there the owners politely offered me shelter, which I accepted. I confess I could not endure to return to Clochegourde; I would not go to Frapesle whence I could see Henriette's home. Here I was near her.

I spent some days in a room whose windows overlooked the tranquil and solitary coombe of which I have spoken; it is a deep ravine in the hills, overgrown with ancient oaks, and down it a torrent rushes in heavy rains. The scene was suited to the severe and solemn meditations to which I gave myself up.

In the course of the day following that fatal night, I had seen how intrusive my presence at Clochegourde would be. The Count had given way to violent feelings at Henriette's death; still, the dreadful event was expected, and in the depths of his heart there was a prepared calmness verging on indifference. I had more than once seen this, and when the Countess had given me the letter I dared not open, when she spoke of her affection for me, this man, suspicious as he was, had not given me the fulminating glance I had expected. He had ascribed his wife's words to the excessive delicacy of her conscience, which he knew to be so pure.

This selfish insensibility was but natural. The souls of these two beings had been no more wedded than their bodies, they had never had that incessant intimacy which renews feeling; they had no communion of griefs or joys, those close ties which, when they are broken, leave us sore at so many

points, because they are one with every fibre, because they are rooted in every fold of the heart, while soothing the soul which sanctions every such tie.

Madeleine's hostility closed Clochegourde to me. This stern young thing was not inclined to come to terms with her aversion over her mother's grave; and I should have been dreadfully uncomfortable between the Count, who would have talked of himself, and the mistress of the house, who would have made no secret of her invincible dislike. And to live on such terms there—where of old the very flowers had caressed me, where the terrace steps were eloquent, where all my memories lent poetry to the balconies, the parapets, the balustrades and terraces, to the trees, and to every point of view; to be hated where all had been love! I could not endure the thought. So my mind was made up from the first. This then, alas! was the end of the strongest love that ever dwelt in the heart of man. In the eyes of strangers my conduct would seem blameworthy, but it had the sanction of my conscience.

This is the outcome of the finest sentiments, the greatest dramas of youth. We all set forth one fine morning, as I had started from Tours for Clochegourde, annexing the world, our hearts craving for love; then, when our treasure has been through the crucible, when we have mixed with men, and known events, it all seems unaccountably small, we find no little gold among the ashes. Such is life—life in its reality! —a great deal of aspiration, a small result.

I meditated on myself at great length, wondering what I could do after a blow that had cut down all my flowers. I determined to rush into politics and science, by the tortuous paths of ambition, to cut women out of my life entirely, and be a statesman—cold, passionless, faithful to the saint I had loved. My thoughts went far away, out of sight, while my eyes were fixed on the glorious background of golden oaks with their sombre heads and feet of bronze. I asked myself

whether Henriette's virtue had not been mere ignorance, whether I was really guilty of her death. I struggled against the burden of remorse. At last, one limpid autumn day, under one of heaven's latest smiles, so lovely in Touraine, I read the letter which, by her instructions, I was not to open before her death—and I read as follows:

Madame de Mortsauf to the Vicomte Félix de Vandenesse.

"Félix, friend too much beloved, I must now open my heart to you, less to tell you how well I love you than to show you the extent of your obligations, by revealing the depth and severity of the wounds you have made in it. At this moment, when I am dropping, exhausted by the fatigues of the journey, worn out by the strokes I have received in the fight, the woman, happily, is dead, the mother alone survives. You will see, my dear, how you were the first cause of my woes. Though I afterward submitted, not unwillingly, to your blows, I am now dying of a last wound inflicted by you; but there is exquisite delight in feeling one's self crushed by the man one loves.

"Before long my sufferings will, no doubt, rob me of my strength, so I take advantage of the last gleam of intelligence to implore you, once more, to fill the place toward my children of the heart you have robbed them of. If I loved you less, I should lay this charge on you authoritatively, but I would rather leave you to assume it out of saintly repentance, and also as a perpetuation of your love for me. Has not our love been always mingled with repentant reflections and expiatory fears? And we love each other still, I know it.

"Your fault is fatal, not so much through your own act as through the importance I have given it in my own heart. Did I not tell you that I was jealous—jealous unto death? Well, I am dying. Yet, be comforted. We have satisfied human law. The church, through one of its purest speakers,

has assured me that God will show mercy to those who have sacrificed their natural weakness to the commandments. So let me, my beloved, tell you all, for I would not keep a single thought from you. What I shall confess to God in my last hour, you too must know who are the king of my heart, as he is the King of Heaven.

"Until the ball given to the Duc d'Angoulême, the only one I ever went to, marriage had left me in the perfect ignorance which gives a maiden's soul its angelic beauty. I was, indeed, a mother, but love had given me none of its permitted pleasures. How was it that this happened? I know not; nor do I know by what law everything in me was changed in an instant. Do you still remember your kisses? They mastered my life, they burnt into my soul. The fire in your blood awoke the fire in mine; your youth became one with my youth; your longing entered into my heart. When I stood up so proudly, I felt a sensation for which I know no word in any language, for children have found no word to express the marriage of their eyes to the light or the kiss of life on their lips. Yes, it was indeed the sound that first aroused the echo, the light flashing in darkness, the impulse given to the universe—at least, it was as instantaneous as all these; but far more beautiful, for it was life to a soul! I understood that there was in the world something I had never known, a power more glorious than thought; that it was all thought, all power, a whole future in a common emotion. I was now no more than half a mother. This thunderbolt, falling on my heart, fired the desires that slept there unknown to me; I suddenly understood what my aunt had meant when she used to kiss my brow and say, 'Poor Henriette!'

"On my return to Clochegourde, the springtime, the first leaves, the scent of flowers, the pretty fleecy clouds, the Indre, the sky, all spoke to me in a tongue I had never yet understood, and which restored to my soul some of the impetus you had given to my senses. If you have forgotten those

terrible kisses, I have never been able to efface them from my memory; I am dying of them!

"Yes, every time I have seen you since, you have revived the impression; I have thrilled from head to foot when I saw you, from the mere presentiment of your coming. Neither time nor my firm determination has been able to quench this insistent rapture. I involuntarily wondered, What then must pleasure be? Our exchange of glances, your respectful kisses on my hands, my arm resting in yours, your voice in its tender tones; in short, the veriest trifles disturbed me so violently that a cloud almost always darkened my sight, and the hum of my rebellious blood sang in my ears. Oh! if in those moments when I was colder to you than ever, you had taken me in your arms, I should have died of happiness. Sometimes I have longed that you might be overbold—but prayer soon drove out that evil thought. Your name spoken by my children filled my heart with hotter blood which mounted in a flush to my face, and I would lay snares for poor little Madeleine, to make her mention it, so dearly did I love the surge of that emotion.

"How can I tell you all? Your writing had its charms; I gazed at your letters as we study a portrait. And if from that first day you had such a fateful power over me, you may imagine, my friend, that it must have become infinite when you allowed me to read to the bottom of your soul. What ecstasy was mine when I found you so pure, so perfectly true, gifted with such great qualities, capable of such great things, and already so sorely tried! A man and a child, timid and brave! What joy it was to find that we had been dedicated to a common suffering!

"From that evening when we confided in each other, to lose you was death to me; I kept you near me out of selfishness. I was deeply touched to find that Monsieur de la Berge was certain that I should die of your absence; he then had read my heart. He decided that I was indispensable to my children

and to the Count; he desired me not to forbid you the house, for I promised him to remain pure in deed and thought. 'Thought is involuntary,' he said, 'but it may be guarded in the midst of torments.' 'If I think,' said I, 'all will be lost; save me from myself! He must stay near me, but I must remain virtuous—help me!'

"The good old man, though most severe, was indulgent to my honest purpose: 'You can love him as a son, and look forward to his marrying your daughter,' he replied.

"I bravely took up a life of endurance that I might not lose you, and suffered gladly when I was sure that we were called to bear the same burden. Ah, God! I remained neutral, faithful to my husband, and never allowing you, Félix, to take a step in your dominion. The frenzy of my passions reacted on my faculties. I regarded the trials inflicted on me by Monsieur de Mortsauf as expiations, and endured them with pride to outrage my guilty wishes. Of old I had been prone to discontent, but after you came to be near us I recovered some spirit, which was a satisfaction to Monsieur de Mortsauf. But for the strength you lent me I should long ago have sunk under the inward life I have told you of. Yes, you have counted for much in the doing of my duty. It is the same with regard to the children; I felt I had robbed them of something, and I feared I could never do enough for them. Henceforth my life was one continued anguish that I cherished. Feeling myself less a mother, less a faithful wife, remorse made its abode in my heart, and for fear of failing in my duties I constantly overdid them. Hence, to save myself, I set Madeleine between us, intending you for each other, and thus raising a barrier between you and me. An unavailing barrier! Nothing could repress the stress of feeling you gave me. Absent or present your power was the same. I loved Madeleine more than Jacques, because Madeleine was to be yours.

"Still, I could not yield to my daughter without a struggle:

I told myself that I was but twenty-eight when I first met you, and that you were nearly twenty-two. I abridged distances, I allowed myself to indulge false hopes. Oh, my dear Félix, I make this confession to spare you some remorse; partly, perhaps, to show you that I was not insensible, that our sufferings in love were cruelly equalized, and that Arabella was in nothing my superior. I, too, was one of those daughters of the fallen race whom men love so well.

"There was a time when the conflict was so fearful that I wept all the night, and night after night; my hair fell out—you have that hair! You remember Monsieur de Mortsauf's illness. Your magnanimity at that time, far from raising me, made me fall lower. Alas! there was a time when I longed to throw myself into your arms as the reward of so much heroism; but that madness was brief. I laid it at the footstool of God during that mass which you refused to attend. Then Jacques' illness and Madeleine's ill health seemed to me as threats from God, who was trying thus to recall the erring sheep. And your love for that Englishwoman, natural as it was, revealed to me secrets of which I knew nothing; I loved you more than I knew I did. I lost sight of Madeleine.

"The constant agitations of this storm-tossed life, the efforts I made to subdue myself with no help but that of religion, have laid the seeds of the disease I am dying of. That dreadful blow brought on attacks of which I would say nothing. I saw in death the only possible conclusion to this unrevealed tragedy.

"I lived a whole life of passion, jealousy, fury, during the two months between the news given me by my mother of your connection with Lady Dudley and your arrival here. I wanted to go to Paris, I thirsted for murder, I longed for the death of that woman, I was insensible to the affection of my children. Prayer, which until then had been a balm to me, had no further effect on my spirit. It was jealousy that made the breach through which death entered in. Still, I

maintained a placid front; yes, that time of conflict was a secret between God and me.

"When I was quite sure that I was as much loved by you as you were by me, and that it was nature only and not your heart that had made you faithless, I longed to live—but it was too late. God had taken me under His protection, in pity no doubt for a being true to herself, true to Him, whose sufferings had so constantly brought her to the gates of the sanctuary. My best-beloved, God has judged me, Monsieur de Mortsauf will no doubt forgive me, but you—will you be merciful? Will you listen to the voice which at this moment reaches you from my tomb? Will you make good the disasters for which we both are responsible—you, perhaps, less than I? You know what I would ask of you. Be to Monsieur de Mortsauf what a sister of charity is to a sick man; listen to him, love him—no one will love him. Stand between him and his children as I have always done. Fill that vacant place.

"The task will not be a long one. Jacques will soon leave home to live in Paris with his grandfather, and you have promised to guide him among the rocks of the world. As to Madeleine, she will marry; would that she might some day accept you! She is all myself, and she is also strong in the will that I lack, in the energy needed in the companion of a man whose career must carry him through the storms of political life; she is clever and clear-sighted. If your destinies were united she would be happier than her mother has been. By acquiring a right to carry on my work at Clochegourde you would wipe out such errors as have been insufficiently atoned for, though forgiven in heaven and on earth, for he is generous and will forgive.

"I am still egotistical, you see; but is not that a proof of overweening love? I want you to love me in those that belong to me. Never having been yours by right, I bequeath to you my cares and duties. If you will not marry Made-

leine, at least you will secure the repose of my soul by making Monsieur de Mortsauf as happy as it is possible for him to be.

"Farewell, dear son of my heart; this is a perfectly rational leave-taking, still full of life; the adieux of a soul on which you have bestowed joys so great that you should feel no remorse over the catastrophe they have led to. And I say this as I remember that you love me; for I am going to the home of rest, a victim to duty, and—which makes me shudder—I cannot go without a regret! God knows better than I can whether I have obeyed His holy laws in the spirit. I have often stumbled, no doubt, but I never fell, and the most pressing cause of my errors lay in the temptations that surrounded me. The Lord will see me, quaking quite as much as though I had yielded.

"Once more farewell—such a farewell as I yesterday bade our beloved valley, in whose lap I shall soon be lying, and to which you will often come, will you not?

"HENRIETTE."

I sat, sunk in a gulf of meditations as I here saw the unknown depths of her life lighted up by this last flash. The clouds of my selfishness vanished. So she had suffered as much as I—more, since she was dead. She had believed that everybody else must be kind to her friend; her love had so effectually blinded her that she had never suspected her daughter's animosity. This last proof of her affection was a painful thing; poor Henriette wanted to give me Clochegourde and her daughter!

Natalie, since the dreadful day when, for the first time I entered a graveyard, following the remains of that noble creature, whom you now know, the sun has been less warm and bright, the night has been blacker, action has been less prompt with me, thought a greater burden. We lay many to rest under the earth, but some of them, especially dear, have our hearts for their winding-sheets, their memory is perpetually one

with its throbs; we think of them as we breathe; they dwell in us by a beautiful law of metempsychosis peculiar to love. There is a soul within my soul. When I do any good thing, when I speak a noble word, it is that soul which speaks and acts; all that is good in me emanates from that tomb as from a lily whose scent embalms the air. Mockery, evil speaking, all you blame in me, is myself.

And now, when a cloud dims my eyes and they look up to heaven after long resting on the earth, when my lips make no response to your words or your kindness, do not henceforth ask me, "What are you thinking about?"

Dear Natalie, I had ceased writing for some little time; these reminiscences had agitated me too painfully. I must now relate the events that followed on this misfortune. They can be told in a few words. When a life consists only of action and stir it is soon recorded; but when it is spent in the loftiest regions of the soul the story must be diffuse.

Henriette's letter showed me one bright star of hope. In this tremendous shipwreck I saw an island I might reach. To live at Clochegourde with Madeleine and devote my life to her was a lot to satisfy all the ideas that tossed my soul; but I must first learn Madeleine's true opinions. I had to take leave of the Count; I went to Clochegourde to call on him, and met him on the terrace. There we walked together for some time.

At first he spoke of his wife as a man who understood the extent of his loss, and all the ruin it had wrought in his home life. But after that first cry of sorrow, he was evidently more anxious about the future than about the present. He was afraid of his daughter, who was not, he said, so gentle as her mother. Madeleine's firm temper and a tinge of something heroical, mingling in her with her mother's gracious nature, terrified the old man, accustomed as he was to Henriette's tender kindness; he foresaw meeting a will which nothing could bend. Still, what comforted him in his loss was the

certainty of joining his wife ere long; the agitations and grief of the last few days had increased his malady and brought on his old pains; the conflict he foresaw between his authority as the father and his daughter's as the mistress of the house would fill his last days with bitterness, for in cases where he could contend with his wife he would have to give way to his child. And then his son would go away, his daughter would marry—what sort of son-in-law should he have?

In the course of an hour, while he talked of nothing but himself, claiming my friendship for his wife's sake, I clearly saw before me the grandiose figure of the *émigré*, one of the most impressive types of our century. In appearance he was frail and broken, but life still clung to him by reason of his simple habits and agricultural occupations.

At this moment, when I write, he still lives.

Though Madeleine could see us pacing the terrace, she did not come down; she came out to the steps and went in again several times, to mark her disdain of me. I seized a moment when she had come out to beg the Count to go up to the house; I wanted to speak to Madeleine, and I made a pretext of a last request left by the Countess—I had no other way of seeing her; the Count went to fetch her, and left us together on the terrace.

"Dear Madeleine," said I, "I must speak a word with you. Was it not here that your mother used to listen to me when she had less to blame me for than the circumstances of her life? My life and happiness are, as you know, bound up with this spot, and you banish me by the coldness you have assumed instead of the brotherly regard which used to unite us and which death has made closer by a common sorrow. Dear Madeleine, for you I would this instant give my life without any hope of reward, without your knowing it even, for so truly do we love the children of the women who have been good to us in their lifetime—you know nothing of the

scheme which your adored mother had cherished for the last seven years, and which may perhaps affect your views—but I will take no advantage of that! All I beseech of you is that you will not deprive me of the right of coming to breathe the air on this terrace, and to wait until time has modified your ideas of social life. At this moment I would not shock them for the world. I respect the grief that misleads you, for it deprives me, too, of the power of judging fairly of the position in which I find myself. The saint who is now watching over us will approve of the reserve I maintain when I only ask you to remain neutral as between your own feelings and myself.

"I love you too truly, in spite of the aversion you show for me, to lay a proposal before the Count which he would hail with eager satisfaction. Be free. But, by-and-by, consider that you will never know anybody in the world so well as you know me, that no man can bear in his heart feelings more devoted——"

So far Madeleine had listened with downcast eyes, but she stopped me with a gesture.

"Monsieur," she said in a voice tremulous with agitation, "I, too, know all your mind. But I can never change in feeling toward you, and I would rather drown myself in the Indre than unite myself with you. Of myself I will not speak, but if my mother's name can still influence you, in her name I beg you never to come to Clochegourde so long as I am here. The mere sight of you occasions me such distress as I cannot describe, and I shall never get over it."

She bowed to me with much dignity and went up to the house, never looking back; as rigid as her mother had been once, and once only, and quite pitiless. The girl's clear sight had, though only of late, seen to the bottom of her mother's heart, and her hatred of the man who seemed to her so fatal was increased, perhaps, by some regret at her own innocent complicity.

Here was an impassable gulf. Madeleine hated me without

choosing to ascertain whether I was the cause or the victim of her griefs; and she would, I dare say, have hated both her mother and me if we had been happy. So this fair castle of promised happiness was in ruins.

I alone was ever to know the whole life of this noble unknown woman, I alone was in the secret of her feelings. I alone had studied her soul in its complete grandeur. Neither her mother, nor her father, nor her husband, nor her children had understood her.

It is a strange thing! I can turn over that pile of ashes, and take pleasure in spreading them before you; we may all find among them something of what has been dearest to us. How many families have their Henriette! How many noble creatures depart from earth without having met with an intelligent friend to tell their story, and to sound their hearts, and measure their depth and height! This is human life in its stern reality; and often mothers know no more of their children than the children know of them. And it is the same with married couples, lovers, brothers and sisters. Could I foresee that the day would come when, over my father's grave, I should go to law with Charles de Vandenesse, the brother to whose advancement I had so largely contributed? Good heavens! How much may be learned from the simplest tale!

When Madeleine had disappeared into the house I came away heart-broken, took leave of my hospitable friends, and set out for Paris along the right bank of the Indre—the road by which I had come down the valley for the first time. I was sad enough as I rode through the village of Pont du Ruan. And yet I was now rich; political life smiled upon me; I was no longer the weary wayfarer of eighteen hundred and fourteen. Then my heart had been full of desires, now my eyes were full of tears; then I had to fill up my life, now I felt it a desert. I was still quite young—twenty-nine—and my heart was crushed. A few years had been enough to rob the landscape of its pristine glory and to disgust me with life. You

may conceive then of my emotion when, on looking back, I discerned Madeleine on the terrace.

Wholly possessed by absorbing sorrow, I never thought of the end of my journey. Lady Dudley was far from my mind when I found that I had unconsciously entered her courtyard. The blunder once made, I could but act it out.

My habits in the house were quite marital; I went upstairs, gloomy in anticipation of a vexatious rupture. If you have ever understood the character of Lady Dudley you can imagine how disconcerted I felt when her butler showed me, as I was, in traveling dress, into a drawing-room where she sat splendidly dressed with a party of five visitors. Lord Dudley, one of the most noteworthy of English statesmen, was standing in front of the fire—elderly, starch, arrogant, cold, with the satirical expression he must wear in the House; he smiled on hearing my name. With their mother were Arabella's two boys, astonishingly like de Marsay, one of the nobleman's natural sons, who was sitting on the sofa by the Marchioness.

Arabella, as soon as she saw me, assumed a lofty air, and stared at my traveling cap as if she were on the point of inquiring what had brought me to see her. She looked at me from head to foot, as she might have done at some country 'squire just introduced to her. As to our intimacy, our eternal passion, her vows that she must die if ever I ceased to love her—all the phantasmagoria of Armida—it had vanished like a dream. I had never held her hand, I was a stranger, she did not know me!

I was startled, in spite of the diplomatic coolness I was beginning to acquire; and any man in my place would have been no less so. De Marsay smiled as he looked at his boots, examining them with obvious significance.

I made up my mind at once. From any other woman I would have submissively accepted my discomfiture; but enraged at finding this heroine, who was to die of love, alive

and well, after laughing to scorn the woman who had died, I determined to meet insolence with insolence. She knew of Lady Brandon's wreck; to remind her of it would be to stab her to the heart, even if it should turn the edge of the dagger.

"Madame," said I, "you will forgive me for coming to you in so cavalier a manner when I tell you that I have this instant arrived from Touraine, and that Lady Brandon gave me a message for you which allows of no delay. I feared I might find that you had started for Lancashire; but since you are not leaving Paris, I await your orders at the hour when you will condescend to receive me."

She bowed and I left the room.

From that day I have never seen her excepting in company, where we exchange friendly bows, with sometimes a repartee. I rally her about the inconsolable women of Lancashire, and she retorts about the Frenchwomen who do credit to their broken hearts by attacks of dyspepsia. Thanks to her good offices I have a mortal foe in de Marsay, whom she makes much of; and I, in return, say she has married father and son.

Thus my disaster was complete.

I took up the plan of life I had decided on during my retirement at Saché. I threw myself into hard work; I took up science, literature, and politics. On the accession of Charles X., who abolished the post I had filled under the late King, I made diplomacy my career. From that hour I vowed never to pay any attention to a woman, however beautiful, witty, or affectionate she might be. This conduct was a wonderful success. I gained incredible peace of mind, great powers of work, and I learned that women waste men's lives and think they have indemnified them by a few gracious words.

However, all my fine resolutions have come to nothing—you know how and why.

Dearest Natalie, in relating my whole life without reserve or concealment, as I should to myself, in confessing to you

feelings in which you had no part, I may perhaps have vexed some tender spot of your jealous and sensitive heart. But what would infuriate a vulgar woman will be, to you, I am sure, a fresh reason for loving me. The noblest women have a sublime part to play toward suffering and aching souls, that of a sister of mercy who dresses their wounds, of the mother who forgives her children. Nor are artists and poets the only sufferers. Men who live for their country, for the future of nations, as they widen the circle of their passions and their thoughts, often find themselves in cruel solitude. They long to feel that by their side is some pure and devoted love. Believe me, they will know its greatness and its value.

To-morrow I shall know whether I have made a mistake in loving you.

To Monsieur le Comte Félix de Vandenesse.

"Dear Count, you received as you tell me, a letter from poor Madame de Mortsauf which has been of some use in guiding you through the world, a letter to which you owe your high fortunes. Allow me to finish your education.

"I implore you to divest yourself of an odious habit. Do not imitate certain widows who are always talking of their first husband and throwing the virtues of the dear departed in the teeth of the second. I, dear Count, am a Frenchwoman; I should wish to marry the whole of the man I loved; now I really cannot marry Madame de Mortsauf.

"After reading your narrative with the attention it deserves—and you know what interest I feel in you—it strikes me that you must have bored Lady Dudley very considerably by holding up to her Madame de Mortsauf's perfections, while deeply wounding the Countess by expatiating on the various resources of English love-making. You have now failed in tact toward me, a poor creature who can boast of no merit but that of having attracted your liking; you have implied

that I do not love you as much as either Henriette or Arabella. I confess my deficiencies. I know them; but why make me feel them so cruelly?

"Shall I tell you whom I pity? The fourth woman you may love. She will inevitably be required to hold her own against three predecessors; so, in your interest as much as in hers, I must warn you against the perils of your memory.

"I renounce the laborious honor of loving you. I should require too many catholic or anglican virtues, and I have no taste for fighting ghosts. The virtues of the Virgin of Clochegourde would reduce the most self-confident woman to despair; and your dashing horsewoman discourages the boldest dreams of happiness. Do what she may, no woman can hope to give you satisfaction in proportion to her ambition. Neither heart nor senses can ever triumph over your reminiscences. You have forgotten that we often ride out together. I have not succeeded in warming up the sun that was chilled by your Henriette's decease; you would shiver by my side.

"My friend—for you will always be my friend—beware of repeating these confidences which strip your disenchantment bare, dishearten love, and compel a woman to doubt her powers. Love, my dear friend, lives on mutual trustfulness. The woman who, before she says a word or mounts her horse, stops to ask herself whether a heavenly Henriette did not speak better, or a horsewoman like Arabella did not display more grace, that woman, take my word for it, will have a trembling tongue and knees.

"You made me wish that I might receive some of your intoxicating nosegays—but you say you will make no more. Thus it is with a hundred things you no longer dare do, with thoughts and enjoyments which can never again be yours. No woman, be very sure, would choose to dwell in your heart elbowing the corpse you cherish there.

"You beseech me to love you out of Christian charity. I could, I own, do much out of charity—everything but love.

"You are sometimes dull and tiresome; you dignify your gloom by the name of melancholy, well and good; but it is intolerable and fills the woman who loves you with cruel anxieties. I have come across that saint's tomb too often standing between us; I have reflected, and I have concluded that I have no wish to die like her. If you exasperated Lady Dudley, a woman of the first distinction, I, who have not her furious passions, fear I should even sooner grow cold.

"Put love out of the question as between you and me, since you no longer find happiness but with the dead, and let us be friends; I am willing.

"Why, my dear Count, you began by loving an adorable woman, a perfect mistress, who undertook to make your fortune, who procured you a peerage, who loved you to distraction—and you made her die of grief! Why, nothing can be more monstrous. Among the most ardent and the most luckless youths who drag their ambitions over the pavements of Paris, is there one who would not have behaved himself for ten years to obtain half the favors which you failed to recognize? When a man is so beloved, what more does he want?

"Poor woman! she suffered much; and you, when you have made a few sentimental speeches, think you have paid your debt over her bier. This, no doubt, is the prize that awaits my affection for you. Thank you, dear Count, but I desire no rival on either side of the grave.

"When a man has such a crime on his conscience, the least he can do is not to tell!

"I asked you a foolish question; it was in my part as a woman, a daughter of Eve. It was your part to calculate the results of the answer. You ought to have deceived me; I should have thanked you for it later. Have you understood wherein lies the merit of men who are liked by women? Do you not perceive how magnanimous they are when they swear that they have never loved before, that this is their first love? Your programme is impossible. Lady Dudley and Madame

de Mortsauf in one! Why, my dear friend, you might as well try to combine fire and water. Do you know nothing of women? They are as they are; they must have the defects of their qualities.

"You met Lady Dudley too soon to appreciate her, and the evil you say of her seems to me the revenge of your wounded vanity; you understood Madame de Mortsauf too late; you punished each for not being the other; what then would become of me, being neither one nor the other?

"I like you well enough to have reflected very seriously on your future prospects. Your look, as of the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, has always interested me (and I believe in the constancy of melancholy men), but I did not know that you had begun your career in the world by killing the loveliest and most virtuous of women. Well, I have been considering what remains for you to do; I have thought it out. I think you had better marry some Mrs. Shandy, who will know nothing of love or passion, who will never trouble her head about Lady Dudley or Madame de Mortsauf, nor about those spells of dullness which you call melancholy—when you are as amusing as a rainy day—and who will be the worthy sister of charity you long for.

"As to love—thrilling at a word, knowing how to wait for happiness, how to give and take it, feeling the myriad storms of passion, making common cause with the little vanities of the woman you love—my dear Count, give it up. You have followed the advice of your good angel too exactly; you have avoided young women so effectually that you know nothing about them. Madame de Mortsauf was wise in getting you to a front place at once; every woman would have been against you and you would never have reached one. It is too late now to begin your training, to learn to say the things we like to hear, to be noble at appropriate moments, to worship our triviality when we have a fancy to be trivial. We are not such simpletons as you think us. When we love, we set the

man of our choice above all else. Anything that shakes our faith in our own supremacy shakes our love. By flattering us, you flatter yourselves.

"If you want to live in the world and mingle on equal terms with women, conceal with care all you have told me; they do not care to strew the flowers of their affections on stones or lavish their tender caresses to heal a wounded heart. Every woman will at once discern the shallowness of your heart and you will be constantly more unhappy. Very few will be frank enough to tell you what I have told you, or good-natured enough to dismiss you without rancor and offer you their friendship, as she now does who still remains your sincere friend.

"NATALIE DE MANERVILLE."

PARIS, *October*, 1835.

ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN.

(*L'Autre Étude de Femme.*)

Translated by CLARA BELL.

To Leon Gozlan as a Token of Literary Good-fellowship.

AT Paris there are almost always two separate parties going on at every ball and rout. First, an official party, composed of the persons invited, a fashionable and much-bored circle. Each one grimaces for his neighbor's eye; most of the younger women are there for one person only; when each woman has assured herself that for that one she is the handsomest woman in the room, and that the opinion is perhaps shared by a few others, a few insignificant phrases are exchanged, such as: "Do you think of going away soon to La Crampade?" "How well Madame de Portenduère sang!" "Who is the little woman with such a load of diamonds?" Or, after firing off some smart epigrams, which give transient pleasure and leave wounds that rankle long, the groups thin out, the mere lookers-on go away, and the wax-lights burn down to the sconces.

The mistress of the house then waylays a few artists, amusing people or intimate friends, saying, "Do not go yet; we will have a snug little supper." These collect in some small, cozy room. The second, the real party, now begins; a party where, as of old, every one can hear what is said, conversation is general, each one is bound to be witty, and to contribute to the amusement of all. Everything is made to tell, honest laughter takes the place of the gloom which in company saddens the prettiest faces. In short, where the rout ends pleasure begins.

The rout, a cold display of luxury, a review of self-conceits in full dress, is one of those English inventions which tend to *mechanize* other nations. England seems bent on seeing the whole world as dull as itself—and dull in the same way. So this second party is, in some French houses, a happy protest on the part of the old spirit of our light-hearted people. Only, unfortunately, so few houses protest; and the reason is a simple one. If we no longer have many suppers nowadays, it is because never, under any rule, have there been fewer men placed, established, and successful than under the reign of Louis Philippe, when the revolution began again, lawfully. Everybody is on the march some whither, or trotting at the heels of Fortune. Time has become the costliest commodity, so no one can afford the lavish extravagance of going home to-morrow morning and getting up late. Hence, there is no second soiree now but at the houses of women rich enough to entertain, and since July, 1830, such women may be counted in Paris.

In spite of the covert opposition of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, two or three women, among them Madame d'Espard and Mademoiselle des Touches, have not chosen to give up the share of influence they exercised in Paris and have not closed their houses.

The salon of Mademoiselle des Touches is noted in Paris as being the last refuge where the old French wit has found a home, with its reserved depths, its myriad subtle byways, and its exquisite politeness. You will there still find grace of manner notwithstanding the conventionalities of courtesy, perfect freedom of talk notwithstanding the reserve which is natural to persons of breeding, and, above all, a liberal flow of ideas. No one there thinks of keeping his thought for a play; and no one regards a story as material for a book. In short, the hideous skeleton of literature at bay never stalks there on the prowl for a clever sally or an interesting subject.

The memory of one of these evenings especially dwells

with me, less by reason of a confidence in which the illustrious de Marsay opened up one of the deepest recesses of woman's heart, than on account of the reflections to which his narrative gave rise, as to the changes that have taken place in the Frenchwoman since the fateful revolution of July.

On that evening chance had brought together several persons whose indisputable merits have won them European reputations. This is not a piece of flattery addressed to France, for there were a good many foreigners present. And, indeed, the men who most shone were not the most famous. Ingenious repartee, acute remarks, admirable banter, pictures sketched with brilliant precision, all sparkled and flowed without elaboration, were poured out without disdain, but without effort, and were exquisitely expressed and delicately appreciated. The men of the world especially were conspicuous for their really artistic grace and spirit.

Elsewhere in Europe you will find elegant manners, cordiality, genial fellowship, and knowledge ; but only in Paris, in this drawing-room, and those to which I have alluded, does the particular wit abound which gives an agreeable and changeful unity to all these social qualities, an indescribable river-like flow which makes this profusion of ideas, of definitions, of anecdotes, of historical incidents, meander with ease. Paris, the capital of taste, alone possesses the science which makes conversation a tourney in which each type of wit is condensed into a shaft, each speaker utters his phrase and casts his experience in a word, in which every one finds amusement, relaxation, and exercise. Here, then, alone, will you exchange ideas ; here you need not, like the dolphin in the fable, carry a monkey on your shoulders ; here you will be understood, and will not risk staking your gold-pieces against base metal.

Here, again, secrets neatly betrayed, and talk, light or deep, play and eddy, changing their aspect and hue at every

phrase. Eager criticism and crisp anecdotes lead on from one to the next. All eyes are listening, a gesture asks a question, and an expressive look gives the answer. In short, and in a word, everything is wit and mind.

The phenomenon of speech, which, when duly studied and well handled, is the power of the actor and the story-teller, had never so completely bewitched me. Nor was I alone under the influence of its spell; we all spent a delightful evening. The conversation had drifted into anecdote, and brought out in its rushing course some curious confessions, several portraits, and a thousand follies, which make this enchanting improvisation impossible to record; still, by setting these things down in all their natural freshness and abruptness, their elusive divarications, you may perhaps feel the charm of a real French evening, taken at the moment when the most engaging familiarity makes each one forget his own interests, his personal conceit, or, if you like, his pretensions.

At about two in the morning, as supper ended, no one was left sitting around the table but intimate friends, proved by an intercourse of fifteen years, and some persons of great taste and good breeding, who knew the world. By tacit agreement, perfectly carried out, at supper every one renounced his pretensions to importance. Perfect equality set the tone. But indeed there was no one present who was not very proud of being himself.

Mademoiselle des Touches always insists on her guests remaining at table until they leave, having frequently remarked the change which a move produces in the spirit of a party. Between the dining-room and the drawing-room the charm is destroyed. According to Sterne, the ideas of an author after shaving are different from those he had before. If Sterne is right, may it not be boldly asserted that the frame of mind of a party at table is not the same as that of the same persons returned to the drawing-room? The new atmosphere is not

heady, the eye no longer contemplates the brilliant disorder of the dessert, lost are the happy effects of that laxness of mood, that benevolence which comes over us while we remain in the humor peculiar to the well-filled man, settled comfortably on one of the springy chairs which are made in these days. Perhaps we are more ready to talk face to face with the dessert and in the society of good wine, during the delightful interval when every one may sit with an elbow on the table and his head resting on his hand. Not only does every one like to talk then, but also to listen. Digestion, which is almost always attent, is loquacious or silent, as the various characters differ. Then every one finds his opportunity.

Was not this preamble necessary to make you know the charm of the narrative, by which a celebrated man, now dead, depicted the innocent jesuitry of woman, painting it with the subtlety peculiar to persons who have seen much of the world, and which makes statesmen such delightful storytellers when, like Prince Talleyrand and Prince Metternich, they vouchsafe to tell a story?

De Marsay, prime minister for some six months, had already given proofs of superior capabilities. Those who had known him long were not indeed surprised to see him display all the talents and various aptitudes of a statesman; still it might yet be a question whether he would prove to be a solid politician, or had merely been moulded in the fire of circumstance. This question had just been asked by a man whom he had made préfet, a man of wit and observation, who had for a long time been a journalist, and who admired de Marsay without infusing into his admiration that dash of acrid criticism by which, in Paris, one superior man excuses himself from admiring another.

"Was there ever," said he, "in your former life, any event, any thought or wish which told you what your vocation was?" asked Emile Blondet; "for we all, like Newton, have our

apple, which falls and leads us to the spot where our faculties develop——"

"Yes," said de Marsay; "I will tell you about it."

Pretty women, political dandies, artists, old men, de Marsay's intimate friends—all settled themselves comfortably, each in his favorite attitude, to look at the minister. Need it be said that the servants had left, that the doors were shut, and the curtains drawn over them? The silence was so complete that the murmurs of the coachmen's voices could be heard from the courtyard, and the pawing and champing made by horses when asking to be taken back to their stable.

"The statesman, my friends, exists by one single quality," said the minister, playing with his gold and mother-of-pearl dessert knife. "To wit: the power of always being master of himself; of profiting more or less, under all circumstances, by every event, however fortuitous; in short, of having within himself a cold and disinterested other self, who looks on as a spectator at all the chances of life, noting our passions and our sentiments, and whispering to us in every case the judgment of a sort of moral ready-reckoner."

"That explains why a statesman is so rare a thing in France," said old Lord Dudley.

"From a sentimental point of view, this is horrible," the minister went on. "Hence, when such a phenomenon is seen in a young man—Richelieu, who, when warned overnight by a letter of Concini's peril, slept till midday, when his benefactor was to be killed at ten o'clock—or say Pitt, or Napoleon—he is a monster. I became such a monster at a very early age, thanks to a woman."

"I fancied," said Madame de Montcornet with a smile, "that more politicians were undone by us than we could make."

"The monster of which I speak is a monster just because he withstands you," replied de Marsay, with a little ironical bow.

"If this is a love story," the Baronne de Nucingen interposed, "I request that it may not be interrupted by any reflections."

"Reflection is so antipathetic to it!" cried Joseph Bridau.

"I was seventeen," de Marsay went on; "the restoration was being consolidated; my old friends know how impetuous and fervid I was then. I was in love for the first time, and I was—I may say so now—one of the handsomest young fellows in Paris. I had youth and good looks, two advantages due to good fortune, but of which we are all as proud as of a conquest. I must be silent as to the rest. Like all youths, I was in love with a woman six years older than myself. No one of you here," said he, looking carefully round the table, "can suspect her name or recognize her. Ronquerolles alone, at the time, ever guessed my secret. He has kept it well, but I should have feared his smile. However, he is gone," said the minister, looking around.

"He would not stay to supper," said Madame de Nucingen.

"For six months, possessed by my passion," de Marsay went on, "but incapable of suspecting that it had overmastered me, I had abandoned myself to that rapturous idolatry which is at once the triumph and the frail joy of the young. I treasured *her* old gloves; I drank an infusion of the flowers *she* had worn; I got out of bed at night to go and gaze at *her* window. All my blood rushed to my heart when I inhaled the perfume she used. I was miles away from knowing that woman is a stove with a marble casing."

"Oh! spare us your terrible verdicts," cried Madame de Montcornet with a smile.

"I believe I should have crushed with my scorn the philosopher who first uttered this terrible but profoundly true thought," said de Marsay. "You are all far too keen-sighted for me to say any more on that point. These few words will remind you of your own follies.

"A great lady, if ever there was one; a widow without

children—oh! all was perfect—my idol would shut herself up to mark my linen with her hair; in short, she responded to my madness by her own. And how can we fail to believe in passion when it has the guarantee of madness?

"We each devoted all our minds to concealing a love so perfect and so beautiful from the eyes of the world; and we succeeded. And what charm we found in our escapades! Of her I will say nothing. She was perfection then, and to this day is considered one of the most beautiful women in Paris; but at that time a man would have endured death to win one of her glances. She had been left with an amount of fortune sufficient for a woman who loved and was adored; but the restoration, to which she owed renewed lustre, made it seem inadequate in comparison with her name. In my position I was so fatuous as never to dream of a suspicion. Though my jealousy would have been of a hundred and twenty Othello-power, that terrible passion slumbered in me as gold in the nugget. I would have ordered my servant to thrash me if I had been so base as ever to doubt the purity of that angel—so fragile and so strong, so fair, so artless, pure, spotless, and whose blue eye allowed my gaze to sound it to the very depths of her heart with adorable submissiveness. Never was there the slightest hesitancy in her attitude, her look, or word; always white and fresh and ready for the Beloved like the Oriental Lily of the 'Song of Songs!' Ah! my friends!" sadly exclaimed the minister, grown young again, "a man must hit his head very hard on the marble to dispel that poem!"

This cry of nature, finding an echo in the listeners, spurred the curiosity he had excited in them with so much skill.

"Every morning, riding Sultan—the fine horse you sent me from England," de Marsay went on, addressing Lord Dudley—"I rode past her open carriage, the horses' pace being intentionally reduced to a walk, and read the order of the day signaled to me by the flowers of her bouquet in case

we were unable to exchange a few words. Though we saw each other almost every evening in society and she wrote to me every day, to deceive the curious and mislead the observant we had adopted a scheme of conduct: never to look at each other; to avoid meeting; to speak ill of each other. Self-admiration, swagger, or playing the disdained swain—all these old manœuvres are not to compare on either part with a false passion professed for an indifferent person and an air of indifference toward the true idol. If two lovers will only play that game the world will always be deceived; but then they must be very secure of each other.

"Her stalking-horse was a man in high favor, a courtier, cold and sanctimonious, whom she never received at her own house. This little comedy was performed for the benefit of simpletons and drawing-room circles, who laughed at it. Marriage was never spoken of between us; six years' difference of age might give her pause; she knew nothing of my fortune, of which, on principle, I have always kept the secret. I, on my part, fascinated by her wit and manners, by the extent of her knowledge and her experience of the world, would have married her without a thought. At the same time, her reserve charmed me. If she had been the first to speak of marriage in a certain tone, I might perhaps have noted it as vulgar in that accomplished soul.

"Six months, full and perfect—a diamond of the purest water! That has been my portion of love in this base world.

"One morning, attacked by the feverish stiffness which marks the beginning of a cold, I wrote her a line to put off one of these secret festivals which are buried under the roofs of Paris like pearls in the sea. No sooner was the letter sent than remorse seized me: she will not believe that I am ill! thought I. She was wont to affect jealousy and suspiciousness. When jealousy is genuine," said de Marsay, interrupting himself, "it is the visible sign of a unique passion."

"Why?" asked the Princess de Cadignan eagerly.

"Unique and true love," said de Marsay, "produces a sort of corporeal apathy attuned to the contemplation into which one falls. Then the mind complicates everything; it works on itself, pictures its fancies, turns them into reality and torment; and such jealousy is as delightful as it is distressing."

A foreign minister smiled as, by the light of memory, he felt the truth of this remark.

"Beside," de Marsay went on, "I said to myself, why miss a happy hour? Was it not better to go, even though feverish? And then, if she learns that I am ill, I believe her capable of hurrying here and compromising herself. I made an effort; I wrote a second letter and carried it myself, for my confidential servant was now gone. The river lay between us. I had to cross Paris; but at last, within a suitable distance of her house, I caught sight of a messenger; I charged him to have the note sent up to her at once, and I had the happy idea of driving past her door in a hackney cab to see whether she might not by chance receive the two letters together. At the moment when I arrived it was two o'clock; the great gate opened to admit a carriage. Whose? That of the stalking-horse!

"It is fifteen years since—well, even while I tell the tale, I, the exhausted orator, the minister dried up by the friction of public business, I still feel a surging in my heart and the hot blood about my diaphragm. At the end of an hour I passed once more; the carriage was still in the courtyard! My note no doubt was in the porter's hands. At last, at half-past three, the carriage drove out. I could observe my rival's expression; he was grave, and did not smile; but he was in love, and no doubt there was business in hand.

"I went to keep my appointment; the queen of my heart met me. I saw her calm, pure, serene. And here I must confess that I have always thought that Othello was not only stupid, but showed very bad taste. Only a man who is half

a negro could behave so: indeed Shakespeare felt this when he called his play 'The Moor of Venice.' The sight of the woman we love is such a balm to the heart that it must dispel anguish, doubt, and sorrow. All my rage vanished. I could smile again. Hence this cheerfulness, which at my age now would be the most atrocious dissimulation, was the result of my youth and my love. My jealousy once buried, I had the power of observation. My ailing condition was evident; the horrible doubts that had fermented in me increased it. At last I found an opening for putting in these words: 'You have had no one with you this morning?' making a pretext of the uneasiness I had felt in the fear lest she should have disposed of her time after receiving my first note. 'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'only a man could have such ideas! As if I could think of anything but your suffering. Till the moment when I received your second note I could think only of how I could really contrive to go to see you.' 'And you were alone?' 'Alone,' said she, looking at me with a face of innocence so perfect that it must have been his distrust of such a look as that which made the Moor kill Desdemona. As she lived alone in the house, the word was a fearful lie. One single lie destroys the absolute confidence which to some souls is the very foundation of happiness.

"To explain to you what passed in me at that moment it must be assumed that we have an internal self of which the exterior *I* is but the husk; that this self, as brilliant as light, is as fragile as a shade—well, that beautiful self was in me thenceforth for ever shrouded in crape. Yes; I felt a cold and fleshless hand cast over me the winding-sheet of experience, dooming me to the eternal mourning into which the first betrayal plunges the soul. As I cast my eyes down that she might not observe my dizziness, this proud thought somewhat restored my strength: 'If she is deceiving you she is unworthy of you!'

"I ascribed my sudden reddening and the tears which

started to my eyes to an attack of pain, and the sweet creature insisted on driving me home with the blinds of the cab drawn. On the way she was full of a solicitude and tenderness that might have deceived the Moor of Venice whom I have taken as a standard of comparison. Indeed, if that great child were to hesitate two seconds longer, every intelligent spectator feels that he would ask Desdemona's forgiveness. Thus, killing the woman is the act of a boy. She wept as we parted, so much was she distressed at being unable to nurse me herself. She wished she were my valet, in whose happiness she found a cause of envy, and all this was as elegantly expressed, oh! as Clarissa might have written in her happiness. There is always a precious ape in the prettiest and most angelic woman!"

At these words all the women looked down as if hurt by this brutal truth so brutally stated.

"I will say nothing of the night nor the week I spent," de Marsay went on. "I discovered that I was a statesman."

It was so well said that we all uttered an admiring exclamation.

"As I thought over the really cruel vengeance to be taken on a woman," said de Marsay, continuing his story, "with infernal ingenuity—for, as we had loved each other, some terrible and irreparable revenges were possible—I despised myself, I felt how common I was, I insensibly formulated a horrible code—that of indulgence. In taking vengeance on a woman, do we not in fact admit that there is but one for us, that we cannot do without her? And, then, is revenge the way to win her back! If she is not indispensable, if there are other women in the world, why not grant her the right to change which we assume?

"This, of course, applies only to passion; in any other sense it would be socially wrong. Nothing more clearly proves the necessity for indissoluble marriage than the instability of passion. The two sexes must be chained up, like

wild beasts as they are, by inevitable law, deaf and mute. Eliminate revenge and infidelity in love is nothing. Those who believe that for them there is but one woman in the world must be in favor of vengeance, and then there is but one form of it—that of Othello.

"Mine was different."

The words produced in each of us the imperceptible movement which newspaper writers represent in parliamentary reports by the words: "Great sensation."

"Cured of my cold, and of my pure, absolute, divine love, I flung myself into an adventure, of which the heroine was charming and of a style of beauty utterly opposed to that of my deceiving angel. I took care not to quarrel with this clever woman who was so good an actress, for I doubt whether true love can give such gracious delights as those lavished by such a dexterous fraud. Such refined hypocrisy is as good as virtue. I am not speaking to you, Englishwomen, my lady," said the minister suavely, addressing Lady Barimore, Lord Dudley's daughter. "I tried to be the same lover.

"I wished to have some of my hair worked up for my new angel so I went to a skilled artist, who at that time dwelt in the Rue Boucher. The man had a monopoly of capillary keepsakes, and I mention his address for the benefit of those who have not much hair; he has plenty of every kind and every color. After I had explained my order he showed me his work. I then saw achievements of patience surpassing those which the story books ascribe to fairies, or which are executed by prisoners. He brought me up to date as to the caprices and fashions governing the use of hair. 'For the last year,' said he, 'there has been a rage for marking linen with hair; happily I had a fine collection of hair and skilled needlewomen.' On hearing this a suspicion flashed upon me; I took out my handkerchief and said, 'So this was done in your shop, with false hair?' He looked at the handkerchief, and said, 'Ay! that lady was very particular, she insisted on veri-

"WHEN ARE YOU TO MARRY THE DUKE?"

fying the tint of the hair. My wife herself marked those handkerchiefs. You have there, sir, one of the finest pieces of work we have ever executed.' Before this last ray of light I might have believed something—might have taken a woman's word. I left the store still having faith in pleasure, but where love was concerned I was as atheistical as a mathematician.

"Two months later I was sitting by the side of the ethereal being in her boudoir, on her sofa; I was holding one of her hands—they were very beautiful—and we scaled the Alps of sentiment, culling their sweetest flowers, and pulling off the daisy-petals; there is always a moment when one pulls daisies to pieces, even if it is in a drawing-room and there are no daisies. At the intensest moment of tenderness and when we are most in love, love is so well aware of its own short duration that we are irresistibly urged to ask, 'Do you love me? Will you love me always?' I seized the elegiac moment, so warm, so flowery, so full-blown, to lead her to tell her most delightful lies, in the enchanting language of rapturous exaggeration and high-flown poetry peculiar to love. Charlotte displayed her choicest allurements: She could not live without me; I was to her the only man in the world; she feared to weary me, because my presence bereft her of all her wits; with me all her faculties were lost in love; she was indeed too tender to escape alarms; for the last six months she had been seeking some way to bind me to her eternally, and God alone knew that secret; in short, I was her god!"

The women who heard de Marsay seemed offended by seeing themselves so well acted, for he seconded the words by airs, and sidelong attitudes, and mincing grimaces which were quite illusory.

"At the very moment when I might have believed these adorable falsehoods, as I still held her right hand in mine, I said to her, 'When are you to marry the Duke?'

"The thrust was so direct, my gaze met hers so boldly, and her hand lay so tightly in mine, that her start, slight as

it was, could not be disguised; her eyes fell before mine, and a faint blush colored her cheeks. 'The Duke! What do you mean?' she said, affecting great astonishment. 'I know everything,' I replied; 'and, in my opinion, you should delay no longer; he is rich; he is a duke; but he is more than devout, he is religious! I am sure, therefore, that you have been faithful to me, thanks to his scruples. You cannot imagine how urgently necessary it is that you should compromise him with himself and with God; short of that you will never bring him to the point.' 'Is this a dream?' said she, pushing her hair from her forehead, fifteen years before Malibran, with the gesture which Malibran has made so famous. 'Come, do not be childish, my angel,' I said, trying to take her hands; but she folded them before her with a little prudish and indignant mien. 'Marry him, you have my permission,' said I, replying to this gesture by using the formal *vous* (you) instead of *tu* (thou). 'Nay, better, I beg you will do so.' 'But,' cried she, falling at my knees, 'there is some horrible mistake; I love no one in the world but you; you may demand any proofs you please.' 'Rise, my dear,' said I, 'and do me the honor of being truthful.' 'As before God.' 'Do you doubt my love?' 'No.' 'Nor my fidelity?' 'No.' 'Well, I have committed the greatest crime,' I went on. 'I have doubted your love and your fidelity. Between two intoxications I looked calmly about me.' 'Calmly!' sighed she. 'That is enough, Henri; you no longer love me.'

"She had at once found, you perceive, a loophole for escape. In scenes like these an adverb is dangerous. But, happily, curiosity made her add: 'And what did you see? Have I ever spoken of the Duke excepting in public? Have you detected in my eyes——?' 'No,' I said, 'but in his. And you have eight times made me go to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin to see you listening to the same mass as he.' 'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'then I have made you jealous!' 'Oh! I

only wish I could be!' said I, admiring the pliancy of her quick intelligence, and these acrobatic feats which can only be successful in the eyes of the blind. 'But by dint of going to church I have become very incredulous. On the day of my first cold, and your first treachery, when you thought I was in bed, you received the Duke, and you told me you had seen no one.' 'Do you know that your conduct is infamous?' 'In what respect? I consider your marriage to the Duke an excellent arrangement; he gives you a great name, the only rank that suits you, a brilliant and distinguished position. You will be one of the queens of Paris. I should be doing you a wrong if I placed any obstacle in the way of this prospect, this distinguished life, this splendid alliance. Ah! Charlotte, some day you will do me justice by discovering how unlike my character is to that of other young men. You would have been compelled to deceive me; yes, you would have found it very difficult to break with me, for he watches you. It is time that we should part, for the Duke is rigidly virtuous. You must turn prude; I advise you to do so. The Duke is vain; he will be proud of his wife.' 'Oh!' cried she, bursting into tears, 'Henri, if only you had spoken! Yes, if you had chosen'—it was I who was to blame, you understand—'we would have gone to live all our days in a corner, married, happy, and defied the world.' 'Well, it is too late now,' said I, kissing her hands and putting on a victimized air. 'Good God! But I can undo it all!' she said. 'No, you have gone too far with the Duke. I ought indeed to go a journey to part us more effectually. We should both have reason to fear our own affection——' 'Henri, do you think the Duke has any suspicions?' I was still 'Henri,' but the *tu* was lost forever. 'I do not think so,' I replied, assuming the manner of a friend; 'but be as devout as possible, reconcile yourself to God, for the Duke waits for proofs; he hesitates, you must bring him to the point.'

"She arose and walked twice round the boudoir in real or

affected agitation; then she no doubt found an attitude and a look beseeming the new state of affairs, for she stopped in front of me, held out her hand, and said in a voice broken by emotion, 'Well, Henri, you are loyal, noble, and a charming man; I shall never forget you.'

"These were admirable tactics. She was bewitching in this transition of feeling, indispensable to the situation in which she wished to place herself in regard to me. I fell into the attitude, the manners, and the look of a man so deeply distressed that I saw her too newly assumed dignity giving way; she looked at me, took my hand, drew me along almost, threw me on to the sofa, but quite gently, and said after a moment's silence, 'I am dreadfully unhappy, my dear fellow. Do you love me?' 'Oh! yes.' 'Well, then, what will become of you?'"

At this point the women all looked at each other.

"Though I can still suffer when I recall her perfidy, I still laugh at her expression of entire conviction and sweet satisfaction that I must die, or at any rate sink into perpetual melancholy," de Marsay went on. "Oh! do not laugh yet!" he said to his listeners; "there is better to come. I looked at her very tenderly after a pause, and said to her, 'Yes, that is what I have been wondering.' 'Well, what will you do?' 'I asked myself that the day after my cold.' 'And——?' she asked with eager anxiety. 'And I have made advances to the little lady to whom I was supposed to be attached.'

"Charlotte started up from the sofa like a frightened doe, trembling like a leaf, gave me one of those looks in which women forego all their dignity, all their modesty, their refinement, and even their grace; the sparkling glitter of a hunted viper's eye when driven into a corner, and ejaculated, 'And I have loved this man! I have struggled! I have——' On this last thought, which I leave you to guess, she made the most impressive pause I ever heard. 'Good God!' she cried, 'how unhappy are we women! we never can be loved. To

you there is nothing serious in the purest feelings. But never mind; when you cheat us you still are our dupes!' 'I see that plainly,' said I, with a stricken air; 'you have far too much wit in your anger for your heart to suffer from it.' This modest epigram increased her rage; she found some tears of vexation. 'You disgust me with the world and with life,' she said; 'you snatch away all my illusions; you deprave my heart.'

"She said to me all that I had a right to say to her, and with a simple effrontery, an artless audacity, which would certainly have nailed any man but me on the spot. 'What is to become of us poor women in a state of society such as Louis XVIII.'s charter has made it?' (Imagine how her words had run away with her.) 'Yes, indeed, we are born to suffer. In matters of passion we are always superior to you, and you are beneath all loyalty. There is no honesty in your hearts. To you love is a game in which you always cheat.' 'My dear,' I answered, 'to take anything serious in society nowadays would be like making romantic love to an actress.' 'What a shameless betrayal! It was deliberately planned!' 'No, only a rational issue.' 'Good-by, Monsieur de Marsay,' she said; 'you have deceived me horribly.' 'Surely,' I replied, taking up a submissive attitude, 'Madame la Duchesse will not remember Charlotte's grievances?' 'Certainly,' she aswered bitterly. 'Then, in fact, you hate me?' She bowed, and I said to myself, 'There is something still left!'

"The feeling she had when I parted from her allowed her to believe that she still had something to avenge. Well, my friends, I have carefully studied the lives of men who have had great success with women, but I do not believe that the Maréchal de Richelieu, or Lauzun, or Louis de Valois ever effected a more judicious retreat at the first attempt. As to my mind and heart, they were cast in a mould then and there, once for all, and the power of control I thus acquired over the thoughtless impulses which make us commit so many

follies gained me the admirable presence of mind you all know."

"How deeply I pity the second!" exclaimed the Baronne de Nucingen.

A scarcely perceptible smile on de Marsay's pale lips made Delphine de Nucingen color.

"How we do forget!" said the Baron de Nucingen.

The great banker's simplicity was so extremely droll that his wife, who was de Marsay's "second," could not help laughing like every one else.

"You are all ready to condemn the woman," said Lady Dudley. "Well, I quite understand that she did not regard her marriage as an act of inconstancy. Men will never distinguish between constancy and fidelity. I know the woman whose story Monsieur de Marsay has told us, she is one of the last of your truly great ladies."

"Alas! my lady, you are right," replied de Marsay. "For very nearly fifty years we have been looking on at the progressive ruin of all social distinctions. We ought to have saved our women from this great wreck, but the civil code has swept its leveling influence over their heads. However terrible the words, they must be spoken: Duchesses are vanishing, and marquises too! As to the baronesses—I must apologize to Madame de Nucingen, who will become a countess when her husband is made a peer of France—baronesses have never succeeded in getting people to take them seriously."

"Aristocracy begins with the viscountess," said Blondet with a smile.

"Countesses will survive," said de Marsay. "An elegant woman will be more or less of a countess—a countess of the empire or of yesterday, a countess of the old block, or, as they say in Italy, a countess by courtesy. But as to the great lady, she died out with the dignified splendor of the last century, with powder, patches, high-heeled slippers, and stiff bodices with a delta stomacher of bows. Duchesses in these days can

pass through a door without any need to widen it for their hoops. The empire saw the last of gowns with trains! I am still puzzled to understand how a sovereign who wished to see his drawing-room swept by ducal satin and velvet did not make indestructible laws. Napoleon never guessed the results of the code he was so proud of. That man, by creating duchesses, founded the race of our 'ladies' of to-day—the indirect offspring of his legislation."

"It was logic, handled as a hammer by boys just out of school and by obscure journalists, which demolished the splendors of the social state," said the Comte de Vandenesse. "In these days every rogue who can hold his head straight in his collar, cover his manly bosom with half an ell of satin by way of a cuirass, display a brow where apocryphal genius gleams under curling locks, and strut in a pair of patent-leather pumps graced by silk socks which cost six francs, screws his eyeglass into one of his eye-sockets by puckering up his cheek, and whether he be an attorney's clerk, a contractor's son, or a banker's bastard, he stares impertinently at the prettiest duchess, appraises her as she walks downstairs, and says to his friend—dressed by Buisson, as we all are, and mounted in patent-leather like any duke himself—'There, my boy, that is a perfect lady.'"

"You have not known how to form a party," said Lord Dudley; "it will be a long time yet before you have a policy. You talk a great deal in France about organizing labor, and you have not yet organized property. So this is what happens: Any duke—and even in the time of Louis XVIII. and Charles X. there were some left who had two hundred thousand francs a year, a magnificent residence, and a sumptuous train of servants—well, such a duke could live like a great lord. The last of these great gentlemen in France was the Prince de Talleyrand. This duke leaves four children, two of them girls. Granting that he has great luck in marrying them all well, each of these descendants will have but sixty or

eighty thousand francs a year now; each is the father or mother of children, and consequently obliged to live with the strictest economy in a flat on the first floor or second floor of a large house. Who knows if they may not even be hunting a fortune? Henceforth the eldest son's wife, a duchess in name only, has no carriage, no people, no opera-box, no time to herself. She has not her own rooms in the family mansion, nor her fortune, nor her pretty toys; she is buried in marriage as a wife in the Rue Saint-Denis is buried in trade; she buys socks for her dear little children, nurses them herself, and keeps an eye on her girls, whom she no longer sends to school at a convent. Thus your noblest dames have been turned into worthy brood-hens."

"Alas! it is true," said Joseph Bridau. "In our day we cannot show those beautiful flowers of womanhood which graced the golden ages of the French monarchy. The great lady's fan is broken. A woman has nothing now to blush for; she need not slander or whisper, hide her face or reveal it. A fan is of no use now but for fanning herself. When once a thing is no more than what it is, it is too useful to be a form of luxury."

"Everything in France has aided and abetted the 'perfect lady,'" said Daniel d'Arthez. "The aristocracy has acknowledged her by retreating to the recesses of its landed estates, where it has hidden itself to die—emigrating inland before the march of ideas, as of old to foreign lands before that of the masses. The women who could have founded European *salons*, could have guided opinion and turned it inside out like a glove, could have ruled the world by ruling the men of art or of intellect who ought to have ruled it, have committed the blunder of abandoning their ground; they were ashamed of having to fight against the citizen class drunk with power, and rushing out on to the stage of the world, there to be cut to pieces perhaps by the barbarians who are at its heels. Hence, where the middle class insists on seeing princesses,

these are really only lady-like young women. In these days princes can find no great ladies whom they may compromise; they cannot even confer honor on a woman taken up at random. The Duc de Bourbon was the last prince to avail himself of this privilege."

"And God alone knows how dearly he paid for it!" said Lord Dudley.

"Nowadays princes have lady-like wives, obliged to share their opera-box with other ladies; royal favor could not raise them higher by a hair's-breadth; they glide unremarkable between the waters of the citizen class and those of the nobility—not altogether noble nor altogether middle class," said the Marquise de Rochegude acridly.

"The press has fallen heir to the woman," exclaimed Rastignac. "She no longer has the quality of a spoken *feuilleton** —delightful calumnies graced by elegant language. We read *feuilletons* written in a dialect which changes every three years, society papers about as mirthful as an undertaker's mute, and as light as the lead of their type. French conversation is carried on from one end of the country to the other in a revolutionary jargon, through long columns of type printed in old mansions where a press groans in the place where formerly elegant company used to meet."

"The knell of the highest society is tolling," said a Russian Prince. "Do you hear it? And the first stroke is your modern word *lady*."

"You are right, Prince," said de Marsay. "The 'perfect lady,' issuing from the ranks of the nobility, or sprouting from the citizen class, and the product of every soil, even of the provinces, is the expression of these times, a last remaining embodiment of good taste, grace, wit, and distinction, all combined, but dwarfed. We shall see no more great ladies in France, but there will be 'ladies' for a long time, elected by public opinion to form an upper chamber of women, and

* The light gossip of a newspaper.

who will be among the fair sex what a 'gentleman' is in England."

"And that they call progress!" exclaimed Mademoiselle des Touches. "I should like to know where the progress lies."

"Why in this," said Madame de Nucingen. "Formerly a woman might have the voice of a fish-seller, the walk of a grenadier, the face of an impudent courtesan, her hair too high on her forehead, a large foot, a thick hand—she was a great lady in spite of it all; but in these days, even if she was a Montmorency—if a Montmorency could ever be such a creature—she would not be a lady."

"But what do you mean by a 'perfect lady?'" asked Count Adam Laginski.

"She is a modern product, a deplorable triumph of the elective system as applied to the fair sex," said the minister. "Every revolution has a word of its own which epitomizes and depicts it."

"You are right," said the Russian, who had come to make a literary reputation in Paris. "The explanation of certain words added from time to time to your beautiful language would make a magnificent history. *Organize*, for instance, is the word of the empire, and sums up Napoleon completely."

"But all that does not explain what is meant by a lady!" the young Pole exclaimed, with some impatience.

"Well, I will tell you," said Emile Blondet to Count Adam. "One fine morning you go for a saunter in Paris. It is past two, but five has not yet struck. You see a woman coming toward you; your first glance at her is like the preface to a good book, it leads you to expect a world of elegance and refinement. Like a botanist over hill and dale in his pursuit of plants, among the vulgarities of Paris life you have at last found a rare flower. This woman is attended by two very distinguished-looking men, of whom one, at any rate, wears an order; or else a servant out of livery follows her at

a distance of ten yards. She displays no gaudy colors, no open-worked stockings, no over-elaborate waist-buckle, no embroiderd frills to her drawers fussing round her ankles. You will see that she is shod with prunella slippers, with sandals crossed over extremely fine cotton stockings, or plain gray silk stockings; or perhaps she wears shoes of the most exquisite simplicity. You notice that her gown is made of a neat and inexpensive material, but made in a way that surprises more than one woman of the middle class; it is almost always a long pelisse, with bows to fasten it, and neatly bound with fine cord or an imperceptible braid. The unknown has a way of her own in wrapping herself in her shawl or mantilla; she knows how to draw it around her from her hips to her neck, outlining a carapace, as it were, which would make an ordinary woman look like a turtle, but which in her sets off the most beautiful forms while concealing them. How does she do it? This secret she keeps, though unguarded by any patent.

"As she walks she gives herself a little concentric and harmonious twist, which makes her supple or dangerous slenderness writhe under the stuff, as a snake does under the green gauze of trembling grass. Is it to an angel or a devil that she owes the graceful undulation which plays under her long, black silk cape, stirs its lace frill, sheds an airy balm, and what I should like to call the breeze of a Parisienne? You may recognize over her arms, round her waist, about her throat, a science of drapery recalling the antique Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses.

"Oh! how thoroughly she understands the *cut* of her gait —forgive the expression. Study the way she puts her foot forward, moulding her skirt with such a decent preciseness that the passer-by is filled with admiration, mingled with desire, but subdued by deep respect. When an Englishwoman attempts this step she looks like a grenadier marching forward to attack a redoubt. The women of Paris have a genius

for walking. The municipality really owed them asphalt sidewalks.

"Our unknown jostles no one. If she wants to pass, she waits with proud humility till some one makes way. The distinction peculiar to a well-bred woman betrays itself, especially in the way she holds her shawl or cloak crossed over her bosom. Even as she walks she has a little air of serene dignity, like Raphael's Madonnas in their frames. Her aspect, at once quiet and disdainful, makes the most insolent dandy step aside for her.

"Her bonnet, remarkable for its simplicity, is trimmed with crisp ribbons; there may be flowers in it, but the cleverest of such women wear only bows. Feathers demand a carriage; flowers are too showy. Beneath it you see the fresh unworn face of a woman who, without conceit, is sure of herself; who looks at nothing, and sees everything; whose vanity, satiated by being constantly gratified, stamps her face with an indifference which piques your curiosity. She knows that she is looked at; she knows that everybody, even women, turn round to see her again. And she threads her way through Paris like a gossamer, spotless and pure.

"This delightful species affects the hottest latitudes, the cleanest longitudes of Paris; you will meet her between the 10th and 110th arcade of the Rue de Rivoli; along the line of the boulevards from the equator of the Passage des Panoramas, where the products of India flourish, where the warmest creations of industry are displayed, to the cape of the Madeleine; in the least muddy districts of the citizen quarters, between No. 30 and No. 130 of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. During the winter she haunts the terrace of the Feuillants, but not the asphalt pavement that lies parallel. According to the weather, she may be seen flying in the avenue of the Champs-Élysées, which is bounded on the east by the Place Louis XV., on the west by the Avenue de Marigny, to the south by the road, to the north by the gardens

of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Never is this pretty variety of woman to be seen in the hyperborean regions of the Rue Saint-Denis, never in the Kamtschatka of miry, narrow, commercial streets; never anywhere in bad weather. These flowers of Paris, blooming only in Oriental weather, perfume the highways; and after five o'clock fold up like morning-glory flowers. The women you will see later, looking a little like them, trying to ape them, are would-be ladies; while the fair unknown, your Beatrice of a day, is a 'perfect lady.'

"It is not very easy for a foreigner, my dear Count, to recognize the differences by which the old observer distinguishes them—women are such consummate actresses; but they are glaring in the eyes of Parisians: hooks ill fastened, strings showing loops of rusty-white tape through a gaping slit in the back, rubbed shoe-leather, ironed bonnet-strings, an overfull skirt, an overtight waist. You will see a certain effort in the intentional droop of the eyelid. There is something conventional in the attitude.

"As to the middle class, the citizen womankind, she can not possibly be mistaken for the lady; she is an admirable foil to her, she accounts for the spell cast over you by the unknown. She is bustling, and goes out in all weathers, trots about, comes, goes, gazes, does not know whether she will or will not go into a store. Where the lady knows just what she wants and what she is doing, the townswoman is undecided, tucks up her skirts to cross a gutter, dragging a child by the hand, which compels her to look out for the vehicles; she is a mother in public, and talks to her daughter; she carries money in her bag, and has open-work stockings on her feet; in winter, she wears a boa over her fur cloak; in summer, a shawl and a scarf; she is accomplished in the redundancies of dress.

"You will meet the fair unknown again at the Italiens, at the opera, at a ball. She will then appear under such a different aspect that you would think them two beings devoid of any

analogy. The woman has emerged from those mysterious garments like a butterfly from its silky cocoon. She serves up, like some rare dainty, to your ravished eyes, the forms which her bodice scarcely revealed in the morning. At the theatre she never mounts higher than the second tier, excepting at the Italiens. You can there watch at your leisure the studied deliberateness of her movements. The enchanting deceiver plays off all the little political artifices of her sex so naturally as to exclude all idea of art or premeditation. If she has a royally beautiful hand, the most perspicacious beholder will believe that it is absolutely necessary that she should twist, or refix, or push aside the ringlet or curl she plays with. If she has some dignity of profile, you will be persuaded that she is giving irony or grace to what she says to her neighbor, sitting in such a position as to produce the magical effect of the 'lost profile,' so dear to great painters, by which the cheek catches the high light, the nose is shown in clear outline, the nostrils are transparently rosy, the forehead squarely modeled, the eye has its spangle of fire, but fixed on space, and the white roundness of the chin is accentuated by a line of light. If she has a pretty foot, she will throw herself on a sofa with the coquettish grace of a cat in the sunshine, her feet outstretched without your feeling that her attitude is anything but the most charming model ever given to a sculptor by lassitude.

"Only the perfect lady is quite at her ease in full dress; nothing inconveniences her. You will never see her, like the woman of the citizen class, pulling up a refractory shoulder-strap, or pushing down a rebellious whalebone, or looking whether her tucker is doing its office of faithful guardian to two treasures of dazzling whiteness, or glancing in the mirrors to see if her head-dress is keeping its place. Her toilet is always in harmony with her character; she has had time to study herself, to learn what becomes her, for she has long known what does not suit her. You will not find her as you go out;

she vanishes before the end of the play. If by chance she is to be seen, calm and stately, on the stairs, she is experiencing some violent emotion; she has to bestow a glance, to receive a promise. Perhaps she goes down so slowly on purpose to gratify the vanity of a slave whom she sometimes obeys. If your meeting takes place at a ball or an evening party, you will gather the honey, natural or affected, of her insinuating voice; her empty words will enchant you, and she will know how to give them the value of thought by her inimitable bearing."

"To be such a woman, is it not necessary to be very clever?" asked the Polish Count.

"It is necessary to have great taste," replied the Princesse de Cadignan.

"And in France taste is more than cleverness," said the Russian.

"This woman's cleverness is the triumph of a purely plastic art," Blondet went on. "You will not know what she said, but you will be fascinated. She will toss her head, or gently shrug her white shoulders; she will gild an insignificant speech with a charming pout and smile; or throw a Voltairean epigram into an 'Indeed!' an 'Ah!' a 'What then!' A jerk of her head will be her most pertinent form of questioning; she will give meaning to the movement by which she twirls a vinaigrette hanging to her finger by a ring. She gets an artificial grandeur out of superlative trivialities; she simply drops her hand impressively, letting it fall over the arm of her chair as dewdrops hang on the cup of a flower, and all is said —she has pronounced judgment beyond appeal, to the apprehension of the most obtuse. She knows how to listen to you; she gives you the opportunity of shining, and—I ask your modesty—those moments are rare?"

The candid simplicity of the young Pole, to whom Blondet spoke, made all the party shout with laughter.

"Now, you will not talk for half-an-hour with a *bourgeoise*

without her alluding to her husband in one way or another," Blondet went on with unperturbed gravity; "whereas, even if you know that your lady is married, she will have the delicacy to conceal her husband so effectually that it will need the enterprise of Christopher Columbus to discover him. Often you will fail in the attempt single-handed. If you have had no opportunity of inquiring, toward the end of the evening you detect her gazing fixedly at a middle-aged man wearing a decoration, who bows and goes out. She has ordered her carriage, and goes.

"You are not the rose, but you have been with the rose, and you go to bed under the golden canopy of a delicious dream, which will last perhaps after sleep, with his heavy finger, has opened the ivory gates of the temple of dreams.

"The lady, when she is at home, sees no one before four; she is shrewd enough always to keep you waiting. In her house you will find everything in good taste; her luxury is for hourly use, and duly renewed; you will see nothing under glass shades, no rags of wrappings hanging about, and looking like a pantry. You will find the staircase warmed. Flowers on all sides will charm your sight—flowers, the only gift she accepts, and those only from certain people, for nosegays live but a day; they give pleasure, and must be replaced; to her they are, as in the East, a symbol and a promise. The costly toys of fashion lie about, but not so as to suggest a museum or a curiosity shop. You will find her sitting by the fire in a low chair, from which she will not rise to greet you. Her talk will not now be what it was at the ball; there she was our creditor; in her own home she owes you the pleasure of her wit. These are the shades of which the lady is a marvelous mistress. What she likes in you is a man to swell her circle, an object for the cares and attentions which such women are now happy to bestow. Therefore, to attract you to her drawing-room, she will be bewitchingly charming. This especially is where you feel how isolated women are nowa-

days, and why they want a little world of their own to which they may seem a constellation. Conversation is impossible without generalities."

"Yes," said de Marsay, "you have truly hit the fault of our age. The epigram—a volume in a word—no longer strikes, as it did in the eighteenth century, at persons or at things, but at squalid events, and it dies in a day."

"Hence," said Blondet, "the intelligence of the lady, if she has any, consists in casting doubts on everything, while the *bourgeoise* uses hers to affirm everything. Here lies the great difference between the two women; the townswoman is certainly virtuous; the lady does not know yet whether she is, or whether she always will be; she hesitates and struggles where the other refuses point-blank and falls full length. This hesitancy in everything is one of the last graces left to her by our horrible times. She rarely goes to church, but she will talk to you of religion; and if you have the good taste to affect freethought, she will try to convert you, for you will have opened a way for the stereotyped phrases, the head-shaking and gestures understood by all these women: 'For shame! I thought you had too much sense to attack religion. Society is tottering, and you deprive it of its support. Why, religion at this moment means you and me; it is property, and the future of our children! Ah! let us not be selfish! Individualism is the disease of the age and religion is the only remedy; it unites families which your laws put asunder,' and so forth. Then she plunges into some neo-Christian speech sprinkled with political notions which is neither catholic nor protestant but—moral? Oh! deuced moral!—in which you may recognize a fag-end of every material woven by modern doctrines, at loggerheads together."

The women could not help laughing at the airs by which Blondet illustrated his satire.

"This explanation, dear Count Adam," said Blondet, turning to the Pole, "will have proved to you that the 'per-

fect lady' represents the intellectual no less than the political muddle, just as she is surrounded by the showy and not very lasting products of an industry which is always aiming at destroying its work in order to replace it by something else. When you leave her you say to yourself: 'She certainly has superior ideas!' And you believe it all the more because she will have sounded your heart with a delicate touch and have asked you your secrets; she affects ignorance, to learn everything; there are some things she never knows, not even when she knows them. You alone will be uneasy, you will know nothing of the state of her heart. The great ladies of old flaunted their love-affairs with newspapers and advertisements; in these days the lady has her little passion neatly ruled like a sheet of music with its crotchets and quavers and minims, its rests, its pauses, its sharps to sign the key. A mere weak woman, she is anxious not to compromise her love, or her husband, or the future of her children. Name, position, and fortune are no longer flags so respected as to protect all kinds of merchandise on board. The whole aristocracy no longer advances in a body to screen the lady. She has not, like the great lady of the past, the demeanor of lofty antagonism; she can crush nothing under foot, it is she who would be crushed. Thus she is apt at Jesuitical *mezzo termine* (middle courses); she is a creature of equivocal compromises, of guarded proprieties, of anonymous passions steered between two reef-bound shores. She is as much afraid of her servants as an Englishwoman who lives in dread of a trial in the divorce court. This woman—so free at a ball, so attractive out walking—is a slave at home; she is never independent but in perfect privacy, or theoretically. She must preserve herself in her position as a lady. This is her task.

"For in our day a woman repudiated by her husband, reduced to a meagre allowance, with no carriage, no luxury, no opera-box, none of the divine accessories of the toilet, is no longer a wife, a maid, or a townswoman; she is adrift, and

becomes a chattel. The Carmelites will not receive a married woman; it would be bigamy. Would her lover still have anything to say to her? That is the question. Thus your perfect lady may perhaps give occasion to calumny, never to slander."

"It is all horribly true," said the Princesse de Cadignan.

"And so," responded Blondet, "our 'perfect lady' lives between English hypocrisy and the delightful frankness of the eighteenth century—a bastard system, symptomatic of an age in which nothing that grows up is at all like the thing that has vanished, in which transition leads nowhere, everything is a matter of degree; all the great figures shrink into the background, and distinction is purely personal. I am fully convinced that it is impossible for a woman, even if she was born close to a throne, to acquire before the age of five-and-twenty the encyclopædic knowledge of trifles, the practice of manœuvring, the important small things, the musical tones and harmony of coloring, the angelic bedevilments and innocent cunning, the speech and the silence, the seriousness and the banter, the wit and the obtuseness, the diplomacy and the ignorance which make up the perfect lady."

"And where, in accordance with the sketch you have drawn," said Mademoiselle des Touches to Emile Blondet, "would you class the female author? Is she a perfect lady—a woman *comme il faut?*" (as she should be).

"When she has no genius, she is a woman *comme il n'en faut pas*" (who is not as she should be), Blondet replied, emphasizing the words with a stolen glance, which might make them seem praise frankly addressed to Camille Maupin. "This epigram is not mine, but Napoleon's," he added.

"You need not owe Napoleon any grudge on that score," said Canalis, with an emphatic tone and gesture. "It was one of his weaknesses to be jealous of literary genius—for he had his mean points. Who will ever explain, depict, or understand Napoleon? A man represented with his arms folded,

and who did everything, who was the greatest force ever known, the most concentrated, the most mordant, the most acid of all forces; a singular genius who carried armed civilization in every direction without fixing it anywhere; a man who could do everything because he willed everything; a prodigious phenomenon of will conquering an illness by a battle, and yet doomed to die of disease in bed after living in the midst of ball and bullets; a man with a code and a sword in his brain, word and deed; a clear-sighted spirit that foresaw everything but his own fall; a capricious politician who risked men by handfuls out of economy, and who spared three heads—those of Talleyrand, of Pozzo di Borgo, and of Metternich, diplomatists whose death would have saved the French empire, and who seemed to him of greater weight than thousands of soldiers; a man to whom nature, as a rare privilege, had given a heart in a frame of bronze; mirthful and kind at midnight amid women, and next morning manipulating Europe as a young girl might amuse herself by splashing the water in her bath! Hypocritical and generous; loving tawdriness and simplicity; devoid of taste, but protecting the arts; and, in spite of these antitheses, really great in everything by instinct or by temperament; Cæsar at five-and-twenty, Cromwell at thirty; and then, like my grocer buried in Père Lachaise, a good husband and a good father. In short, he improvised public works, empires, kings, codes, verses, a romance—and all with more range than precision. Did he not aim at making all Europe France? And, after making us weigh on the earth in such a way as to change the laws of gravitation, he left us poorer than on the day when he first laid hands on us; while he, who had taken an empire by his name, lost his name on the frontier of his empire in a sea of blood and soldiers. A man all thought and all action, who comprehended Desaix and Fouché."

"All despotism and all justice at the right moments. The true king?" said de Marsay.

"Ah! vat a pleashre it is to dichest vile you talk," said Baron de Nucingen.

"But do you suppose that the treat we are giving you is a common one?" asked Joseph Bridau. "If you had to pay for the charms of conversation as you do for those of dancing or of music, your fortune would be inadequate! There is no second performance of the same flash of wit."

"And are we really so much deteriorated as these gentlemen think?" said the Princesse de Cadignan, addressing the women with a smile at once skeptical and ironical. "Because, in these days, under a régime which makes everything small, you prefer small dishes, small rooms, small pictures, small articles, small newspapers, small books, does that prove that women too have grown smaller? Why should the human heart change because you change your coat? In all ages the passions will remain the same. I know cases of beautiful devotion, of sublime sufferings, which lack the publicity—the glory, if you choose—which formerly gave lustre to the errors of some women. But though one may not have saved a King of France, one is not the less an Agnes Sorel. Do you believe that our dear Marquise d'Espard is not the peer of Madame Doublet or Madame du Deffant, in whose rooms so much evil was spoken and done? Is not Taglioni a match for Camargo? or Malibran the equal of Saint-Huberti? Are not our poets superior to those of the eighteenth century? If at this moment, through the fault of the grocers who govern us, we have not a style of our own, had not the empire its distinguishing stamp as the age of Louis XV. had, and was not its splendor fabulous? Have the sciences lost anything?"

"I am quite of your opinion, madame; the women of this age are truly great," replied the Comte de Vandenesse. "When posterity shall have followed us, will not Madame Récamier appear in proportions as fine as those of the most beautiful women of the past? We have made so much his-

tory that historians will be lacking! The age of Louis XIV. had but one Madame de Sévigné; we have a thousand now in Paris who certainly write better than she did, and who do not publish their letters. Whether the Frenchwoman be called 'perfect lady' or great lady, she will always be *the* woman among women.

"Emile Blondet has given us a picture of the fascinations of a woman of the day; but, at need, this creature who bridles or shows off, who chirps out the ideas of Mr. This and Mr. That, would be heroic. And it must be said, your faults, mesdames, are all the more poetical, because they must always, and under all circumstances, be surrounded by greater perils. I have seen much of the world, I have studied it perhaps too late; but in cases where the illegality of your feelings might be excused, I have always observed the effects of I know not what chance—which you may call providence—inevitably overwhelming such as we consider light women."

"I hope," said Madame de Vandenesse, "that we can be great in other ways——"

"Oh, let the Comte de Vandenesse preach to us!" exclaimed Madame de Sérizy.

"With all the more reason because he has preached a great deal by example," said the Baronne de Nucingen.

"On my honor!" said General de Montriveau, "in all the dramas—a word you are very fond of," he said, looking at Blondet—"in which the finger of God has been visible, the most frightful I ever knew was very near being by my act——"

"Well, tell us all about it!" cried Lady Barimore; "I love to shudder!"

"It is the taste of a virtuous woman," replied de Marsay, looking at Lord Dudley's lovely daughter.

"During the campaign of 1812," General de Montriveau began, "I was the involuntary cause of a terrible disaster which may be of use to you, Doctor Bianchon," turning to

the doctor, "since, while devoting yourself to the human body, you concern yourself a good deal with the mind; it may tend to solve some of the problems of the will.

"I was going through my second campaign; I enjoyed danger, and laughed at everything, like the young and foolish lieutenant of artillery that I was. When we reached the Beresina, the army had, as you know, lost all discipline and had forgotten military obedience. It was a medley of men of all nations, instinctively making their way from north to south. The soldiers would drive a general in rags and barefoot away from their fire if he brought neither wood nor victuals. After the passage of this famous river disorder did not diminish. I had come quietly and alone, without food, out of the marshes of Zembin, and was wandering in search of a house where I might be taken in. Finding none, or driven away from those I came across, happily toward evening I perceived a wretched little Polish farm, of which nothing can give you any idea unless you have seen the wooden houses of Lower Normandy, or the poorest farm-buildings of la Beauce. These dwellings consist of a single room, with one end divided off by a wooden partition, the smaller division serving as a storeroom for forage.

"In the darkness of twilight I could just see a faint smoke rising above this house. Hoping to find there some comrades more compassionate than those I had hitherto addressed, I boldly walked as far as the farm. On going in, I found the table laid. Several officers, and with them a woman—a common sight enough—were eating potatoes, some horseflesh broiled over the charcoal, and some frozen beet-roots. I recognized among the company two or three artillery captains of the regiment in which I had first served. I was welcomed with a shout of acclamation, which would have amazed me greatly on the other side of the Beresina; but at this moment the cold was less intense; my fellow-officers were resting, they were warm, they had food, and the room, strewn with trusses

of straw, gave the promise of a delightful night. We did not ask for so much in those days. My comrades could be philanthropists *gratis*—one of the commonest ways of being philanthropic. I sat down to eat on one of the bundles of straw.

"At the end of the table, by the side of the door opening into the smaller room full of straw and hay, sat my old colonel, one of the most extraordinary men I ever saw among all the mixed collection of men it has been my lot to meet. He was an Italian. Now, whenever human nature is truly fine in the lands of the south, it is really sublime. I do not know whether you have ever observed the extreme fairness of Italians when they are fair. It is exquisite, especially under an artificial light. When I read the fantastical portrait of Colonel Oudet sketched by Charles Nodier, I found my own sensations in every one of his elegant phrases. Italian, then, as were most of the officers of his regiment, which had, in fact, been borrowed by the Emperor from Eugène's army, my colonel was a tall man, at least eight or nine inches above the standard, and admirably proportioned—a little stout perhaps, but prodigiously powerful, active, and clean-limbed as a grayhound. His black hair in abundant curls showed up his complexion, as white as a woman's; he had small hands, a shapely foot, a pleasant mouth, and an aquiline nose delicately formed, of which the tip used to become naturally pinched and white whenever he was angry, as happened often. His irascibility was so far beyond belief that I will tell you nothing about it; you will have the opportunity of judging of it. No one could be calm in his presence. I alone, perhaps, was not afraid of him; he had indeed taken such a singular fancy to me that he thought everything I did right. When he was in a rage his brow was knit and the muscles of the middle of his forehead set in a delta, or, to be more explicit, in Redgauntlet's horseshoe. This mark was, perhaps, even more terrifying than the magnetic flashes of his blue eyes. His whole

frame quivered, and his strength, great as it was in his normal state, became almost unbounded.

"He spoke with a strong guttural roll. His voice, at least as powerful as that of Charles Nodier's Oudet, threw an incredible fullness of tone into the syllable or the consonant in which this burr was sounded. Though this faulty pronunciation was at times a grace, when commanding his men or when he was excited, you cannot imagine, unless you had heard it, what force was expressed by this accent, which at Paris is so common. When the colonel was quiescent, his blue eyes were sweetly angelic, and his smooth brow had a most charming expression. On parade or with the army of Italy, not a man could compare with him. Indeed, d'Orsay himself, the handsome d'Orsay, was eclipsed by our colonel on the occasion of the last review held by Napoleon before the invasion of Russia.

"Everything was in contrasts in this exceptional man. Passion lives on contrast. Hence you need not ask whether he exerted over women the irresistible influences to which our nature yields"—and the general looked at the Princesse de Cadignan—"as vitreous matter is moulded under the pipe of the glassblower; still, by a singular fatality—an observer might perhaps explain the phenomenon—the colonel was not a lady-killer, or was indifferent to such successes.

"To give you an idea of his violence, I will tell you in a few words what I once saw him do in a paroxysm of fury: We were dragging our guns up a very narrow road, bordered by a somewhat high slope on one side and by thickets on the other. When we were half-way up we met another regiment of artillery, its colonel marching at the head. This colonel wanted to make the captain who was at the head of our foremost battery back down again. The captain, of course, refused; but the colonel of the other regiment signed to his foremost battery to advance, and, in spite of the care the driver took to keep among the scrub, the wheel of the first

gun struck our captain's right leg and broke it, throwing him over on the near-side of his horse. All this was the work of a moment. Our colonel, who was but a little way off, guessed that there was a quarrel; he galloped up, riding among the guns at the risk of falling with his horse's four feet in the air, and reached the spot, face to face with the other colonel, at the very moment when the captain fell, calling out 'Help!' No, our Italian colonel was no longer human! Foam like the froth of champagne rose to his lips; he roared inarticulately like a lion. Incapable of uttering a word, or even a cry, he made a terrific signal to his antagonist, pointing to the wood and drawing his sword. The two colonels went aside. In two seconds we saw our colonel's opponent stretched on the ground, his skull split in two. The soldiers of his regiment backed—yes, by heaven, and pretty quickly too!

"The captain, who had been so nearly crushed, and who lay yelping in the puddle where the gun carriage had thrown him, had an Italian wife, a beautiful Sicilian of Messina, who was not indifferent to our colonel. This circumstance had aggravated his rage. He was pledged to protect the husband, bound to defend him as he would have defended the woman herself.

"Now, in the hovel beyond Zembin, where I was so well received, this captain was sitting opposite to me, and his wife was at the other end of the table, facing the colonel. This Sicilian was a little woman named Rosina, very dark, but with all the fire of the southern sun in her black almond-shaped eyes. At this moment she was deplorably thin; her face was covered with dust, like fruit exposed to the drought of a high-road. Scarcely clothed in rags, exhausted by marches, her hair in disorder, and clinging together under a piece of a shawl tied close over her head, still she had the graces of a woman; her movements were engaging, her small rosy mouth and white teeth, the outline of her features and

figure, charms which misery, cold, and neglect had not altogether defaced, still suggested love to any man who could think of a woman. Rosina had one of those frames which are fragile in appearance, but wiry and full of spring. Her husband, a gentleman of Piedmont, had a face expressive of ironical simplicity, if it is allowable to ally the two words. Brave and well informed, he seemed to know nothing of the connection which had subsisted between his wife and the colonel for three years past. I ascribed this unconcern to Italian manners, or to some domestic secret; yet there was in the man's countenance one feature which always filled me with involuntary distrust. His under lip, which was thin and very restless, turned down at the corners instead of turning up, and this, as I thought, betrayed a streak of cruelty in a character which seemed so phlegmatic and indolent.

"As you may suppose, the conversation was not very sparkling when I went in. My weary comrades ate in silence; of course, they asked me some questions, and we related our misadventures, mingled with reflections on the campaign, the generals, their mistakes, the Russians, and the cold. A minute after my arrival the colonel, having finished his meagre meal, wiped his mustache, bade us good-night, shot a black look at the Italian woman, saying, 'Rosina?' and then, without waiting for a reply, went into the little barn full of hay to bed. The meaning of the colonel's utterance was self-evident. The young wife replied by an indescribable gesture, expressing all the annoyance she could not but feel at seeing her thraldom thus flaunted without human decency, and the offense to her dignity as a woman and to her husband. But there was, too, in the rigid setting of her features and the tight knitting of her brows a sort of presentiment; perhaps she foresaw her fate. Rosina remained quietly in her place.

"A minute later, and apparently when the colonel was snug in his couch of straw or hay, he repeated, 'Rosina?'

"The tone of this second call was even more brutally

questioning than the first. The colonel's strong burr, and the length which the Italian language allows to be given to vowels and the final syllable, concentrated all the man's despotism, impatience, and strength of will. Rosina turned pale, but she rose, passed behind us, and went to the colonel.

"All the party sat in utter silence; I, unluckily after looking at them all, began to laugh, and then they all laughed too. '*Tu ridi?*—you laugh?' said the husband.

"'On my honor, old comrade,' said I, becoming serious again, 'I confess that I was wrong; I ask your pardon a thousand times, and if you are not satisfied by my apologies I am ready to give you satisfaction.'

"'Oh! it is not you who are wrong, it is I!' he replied coldly.

"Thereupon we all lay down in the room and before long all were sound asleep.

"Next morning each one, without rousing his neighbor or seeking companionship, set out again on his way, with that selfishness which made our rout one of the most horrible dramas of self-seeking, melancholy, and horror which ever was enacted under heaven. Nevertheless, at about seven or eight hundred paces from our shelter we, most of us, met again and walked on together, like geese led in flocks by a child's willful tyranny. The same necessity urged us all.

"Having reached a knoll whence we could still see the farmhouse where we had spent the night, we heard sounds resembling the roar of lions in the desert, the bellowing of bulls—no, it was a noise which can be compared to no known cry. And yet, mingling with this horrible and ominous roar, we could hear a woman's feeble scream. We all looked round, seized by I know not what impulse of terror; we no longer saw the house, but a huge bonfire. The farmhouse had been barricaded, and was in flames. Swirls of smoke borne on the wind brought us hoarse cries and an indescribable pungent smell. A few yards behind the captain was quietly approach-

ing to join our caravan; we gazed at him in silence, for no one dared question him; but he, understanding our curiosity, pointed to his breast with the forefinger of his right hand, and, waving the left in the direction of the fire, he said, '*Son'io.*'

"We all walked on without saying a word to him."

"There is nothing more terrible than the revolt of a sheep," said de Marsay.

"It would be frightful to let us leave with this horrible picture in our memory," said Madame de Montcornet. "I shall dream of it——"

"And what was the punishment of Monsieur de Marsay's 'First?'" asked Lord Dudley, smiling.

"When the English are in jest, their foils have the buttons on," said Blondet.

"Monsieur Bianchon can tell us, for he saw her dying," replied de Marsay, turning to me.

"Yes," said Bianchon, "her end was one of the most beautiful I ever saw. The Duke and I spent the night by the dying woman's pillow; pulmonary consumption, in the last stage, left no hope; she had taken the sacrament the day before. The Duke had fallen asleep. The Duchess, waking at about four in the morning, signed to me in the most touching way, with a friendly smile, to bid me leave him to rest, and she meanwhile was about to die. She had become incredibly thin, but her face had preserved its really sublime outline and features. Her pallor made her skin look like porcelain with a light within. Her bright eyes and color contrasted with this languidly elegant complexion, and her countenance was full of impressive calm. She seemed to pity the Duke, and the feeling had its origin in a lofty tenderness which, as death approached, seemed to know no bounds. The silence was absolute. The room, softly lighted by a lamp, looked like every sick-room at the hour of death.

"At this moment the clock struck. The Duke awoke, and

was in despair at having fallen asleep. I did not see the gesture of impatience by which he manifested the regret he felt at having lost sight of his wife for a few of the last minutes vouchsafed to him; but it is quite certain that any one but the dying woman might have misunderstood it. A busy statesman, always thinking of the interests of France, the Duke had a thousand-odd ways on the surface, such as often lead to a man of genius being mistaken for a madman, and of which the explanation lies in the exquisiteness and exacting needs of their intellect. He came to seat himself in an armchair by his wife's side, and looked fixedly at her. The dying woman put her hand out a little way, took her husband's and clasped it feebly; and in a low but agitated voice she said, 'My poor dear, who is left to understand you now?' Then she died, looking at him."

"The stories the doctor tells us," said the Comte de Vandenesse, "always leave a deep impression."

"But a sweet one," said Mademoiselle des Touches, as she arose.

PARIS, *June*, 1839–42.

THE GREAT BRETÊCHE.

(Sequel to "Another Study of Woman.")

Translated by CLARA BELL.

"AH! madame," replied the doctor, "I have some appalling stories in my collection. But each one has its proper hour in a conversation—you know the pretty jest recorded by Chamfort, and said to the Duc de Fronsac: 'Between your sally and the present moment lie ten bottles of champagne.'"

"But it is two in the morning, and the story of Rosina has prepared us," said the mistress of the house.

"Tell us, Monsieur Bianchon," was the cry on every side.

The obliging doctor bowed, and silence reigned.

"At about a hundred paces from Vendôme, on the banks of the Loire," said he, "stands an old brown house, crowned with very high roofs, and so completely isolated that there is nothing near it, not even a fetid tannery or a squalid tavern, such as are commonly seen outside small towns. In front of this house is a garden down to the river, where the box-shrubs, formerly clipped close to the edge of the walks, now straggle at their own will. A few willows, rooted in the stream, have grown up quickly like an enclosing fence and half-hide the house. The wild plants we call weeds have clothed the bank with their beautiful luxuriance. The fruit trees, neglected for these ten years past, no longer bear a crop, and their suckers have formed a thicket. The espaliers are like a copse. The paths, once graveled, are overgrown with purslane; but, to be accurate, there is no trace of a path.

"Looking down from the hill-top, to which cling the ruins of the old castle of the Dukes of Vendôme, the only spot

whence the eye can see into this enclosure, we think that at a time, difficult now to determine, this spot of earth must have been the joy of some country gentleman devoted to roses and tulips—in a word, to horticulture—but, above all, a lover of choice fruit. An arbor is visible, or rather the wreck of an arbor, and under it a table still stands not entirely destroyed by time. At the aspect of this garden that is no more, the negative joys of the peaceful life of the provinces may be divined as we divine the history of a worthy tradesman when we read the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the mournful and tender impressions which seize the soul, on one of the walls is a sundial graced with this homely Christian motto, '*Ultimam cogita.*'

"The roof of this house is dreadfully dilapidated; the outside shutters are always closed; the balconies are hung with swallows' nests; the doors are for ever shut. Straggling grasses have outlined the flagstones of the steps with green; the ironwork is rusty. Moon and sun, winter, summer, and snow have eaten into the wood, warped the boards, peeled off the paint. The dreary silence is broken only by birds and cats, polecats, rats, and mice, free to scamper around, and fight, and eat each other. An invisible hand has written over it all: 'Mystery.'

"If, prompted by curiosity, you go to look at this house from the street, you will see a large gate, with a round-arched top; the children have made many holes in it. I learned later that this door had been blocked for ten years. Through these irregular breaches you will see that the side toward the courtyard is in perfect harmony with the side toward the garden. The same ruin prevails. Tufts of weeds outline the paving stones; the walls are scored by enormous cracks, and the blackened coping is laced with a thousand festoons of pellitory. The stone steps are disjointed; the bell-cord is rotten; the gutter-spouts broken. What fire from heaven can have fallen there? By what decree has salt been sown on this

dwelling? Has God been mocked here? Or was France betrayed? These are the questions we ask ourselves. Reptiles crawl over it, but give no reply. This empty and deserted house is a vast enigma of which the answer is known to none.

"It was formerly a little domain, held in fief, and is known as La Grande Bretêche. During my stay at Vendôme, where Despleins had left me in charge of a rich patient, the sight of this strange dwelling became one of my keenest pleasures. Was it not far better than a ruin? Certain memories of indisputable authenticity attach themselves to a ruin; but this house, still standing, though being slowly destroyed by an avenging hand, contained a secret, an unrevealed thought. At the very least it testified to a caprice. More than once in the evening I boarded the hedge, run wild, which surrounded the enclosure. I braved scratches, I got into this ownerless garden, this plot which was no longer public or private; I lingered there for hours gazing at the disorder. I would not, as the price of the story to which this strange scene no doubt was due, have asked a single question of any gossiping native. On that spot I wove delightful romances, and abandoned myself to little debauches of melancholy which enchanted me. If I had known the reason—perhaps quite commonplace—of this neglect, I should have lost the unwritten poetry which intoxicated me. To me this refuge represented the most various phases of human life, shadowed by misfortune; sometimes the calm of a cloister without the monks; sometimes the peace of the graveyard without the dead, who speak in the language of epitaphs; one day I saw in it the home of lepers; another, the house of the Atridæ; but, above all, I found there provincial life, with its contemplative ideas, its hour-glass existence. I often wept there; I never laughed.

"More than once I felt involuntary terrors as I heard overhead the dull hum of the wings of some hurrying wood-

pigeon. The earth is dank; you must be on the watch for lizards, vipers, and frogs, wandering about with the wild freedom of nature; above all, you must have no fear of cold, for in a few minutes you feel an icy cloak settle on your shoulders, like the commendatore's hand on Don Giovanni's neck.

"One evening I felt a shudder; the wind had turned an old rusty weathercock, and the creaking sounded like a cry from the house, at the very moment when I was finishing a gloomy drama to account for this monumental embodiment of woe. I returned to my inn, lost in gloomy thoughts. When I had supped, the hostess came in to my room with an air of mystery, and, apologetically, said, 'Monsieur, here is Monsieur Regnault.'

"'Who is Monsieur Regnault?'

"'What, sir, do you not know Monsieur Regnault? Well, that's odd,' said she, leaving the room.

"On a sudden I saw a man appear, tall, slim, dressed in black, hat in hand, who came in like a ram ready to butt his opponent, showing a receding forehead, a small pointed head, and a colorless face of the hue of a glass of dirty water. You would have taken him for an usher. The stranger wore an old coat, much worn at the seams; but he had a diamond in his shirt frill and gold rings in his ears.

"'Monsieur,' said I, 'whom have I the honor of addressing?' He took a chair, placed himself in front of my fire, put his hat on my table, and answered while he rubbed his hands: 'Dear me, it is very cold. Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault.'

"I was encouraging myself by saying to myself, 'Here good dog! Seek!'

"'I am,' he went on, 'notary at Vendôme.'

"'I am delighted to hear it, monsieur,' I exclaimed. 'But I am not in a position to make a will for reasons best known to myself.'

"'One moment!' said he, holding up his hand as though to gain silence. 'Allow me, monsieur, allow me! I am informed that you sometimes go to walk in the garden of La Grande Bretêche.'

"'Yes, monsieur.'

"'One moment!' said he, repeating his gesture. 'That constitutes a misdemeanor. Monsieur, as executor under the will of the late Comtesse de Merret, I come in her name to beg you to discontinue the practice. One moment! I am not a Turk, and do not wish to make a crime of it. And, beside, you are free to be ignorant of the circumstances which compel me to leave the finest mansion in Vendôme to fall into ruin. Nevertheless, monsieur, you must be a man of education, and you should know that the laws forbid, under heavy penalties, any trespass on enclosed property. A hedge is the same as a wall. But the state in which the place is left may be an excuse for your curiosity. For my part, I should be quite content to make you free to come and go in the house; but being bound to respect the will of the testatrix, I have the honor, monsieur, to beg that you will go into the garden no more. I myself, monsieur, since the will was read, have never set foot in the house, which, as I had the honor of informing you, is part of the estate of the late Madame de Merret. We have done nothing there but verify the number of doors and windows to assess the taxes I have to pay annually out of the funds left for that purpose by the late Madame de Merret. Ah! my dear sir, her will made a great commotion in the town.'

"The good man paused to blow his nose. I respected his volubility, perfectly understanding that the administration of Madame de Merret's estate had been the most important event of his life, his reputation, his glory, his restoration. As I was forced to bid farewell to my beautiful reveries and romances, I was to reject learning the truth on official authority.

"'Monsieur,' said I, 'would it be indiscreet if I were to ask you the reasons for such eccentricity?'

"At these words an expression, which revealed all the pleasure which men feel who are accustomed to ride a hobby, overspread the lawyer's countenance. He pulled up the collar of his shirt with an air, took out his snuff-box, opened it and offered me a pinch; on my refusing, he took a large one. He was happy! A man who has no hobby does not know all the good to be gotten out of life. A hobby is the happy medium between a passion and a monomania. At this very moment I understood the whole bearing of Sterne's charming passion, and had a perfect idea of the delight with which my Uncle Toby, encouraged by Trim, bestrode his hobby-horse.

"'Monsieur,' said Monsieur Regnault, 'I was the head clerk in Monsieur Roguin's law office, in Paris. A first-rate house, which you, perhaps, have heard mentioned? No! An unfortunate bankruptcy made it famous. Not having money enough to purchase a practice in Paris at the price to which they were run up in 1816, I came here and bought my predecessor's business. I had relations in Vendôme; among others, a wealthy aunt, who allowed me to marry her daughter. Monsieur,' he went on after a little pause, 'three months after being licensed by the keeper of the seals, one evening, as I was going to bed—it was before my marriage—I was sent for by Madame la Comtesse de Merret, to her château of Merret. Her maid, a good girl, who is now a servant in this inn, was waiting at my door with the Countess' own carriage. Ah! one moment! I ought to tell you that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to Paris to die two months before I came here. He came to a miserable end, flinging himself into every kind of dissipation. You understand?

"'On the day when he left, Madame la Comtesse had quitted La Grande Bretêche, having dismantled it. Some people even say that she had burnt all the furniture, the hangings—in short, all the chattels and furniture whatever

used in furnishing the premises now let by the said M. (Dear! what am I saying? I beg your pardon, I thought I was dictating a lease.) In short, that she burnt everything in the meadow at Merret. Have you been to Merret, monsieur? No,' said he, answering himself. 'Ah, indeed, it is a very fine place.

"'For about three months previously,' he went on, with a jerk of his head, 'the Count and Countess had lived in a very eccentric way; they admitted no visitors; madame lived on the first floor and monsieur on the second floor. When the Countess was left alone, she was never seen excepting at church. Subsequently, at home, at the château, she refused to see the friends, whether gentlemen or ladies, who went to call on her. She was already very much altered when she left La Grande Bretêche to go to Merret. That dear lady—I say dear lady, for it was she who gave me this diamond, but indeed I saw her but once—that kind lady was very ill; she had, no doubt, given up all hope, for she died without choosing to send for a doctor; indeed, many of our ladies fancied she was not quite right in her head. Well, sir, my curiosity was strangely excited by hearing that Madame de Merret had need of my services. Nor was I the only person who took an interest in the affair. That very night, though it was already late, all the town knew that I was going to Merret.

"'The waiting-woman replied but vaguely to the questions I asked her on the way; nevertheless, she told me that her mistress had received the sacrament in the course of the day at the hands of the curé of Merret, and seemed unlikely to live through the night. It was about eleven when I reached the château. I went up the great staircase. After crossing some large, lofty, dark rooms, diabolically cold and damp, I reached the state bedroom where the Countess lay. From the rumors that were current concerning this lady (monsieur, I should never end if I were to repeat all the tales that were told about her), I had imagined her a coquette. Imagine,

then, that I had great difficulty in seeing her in the great bed whereon she was lying. To be sure, to light this enormous room, with old-fashioned heavy cornices and so thick with dust that merely to see it was enough to make you sneeze, she had only an old argand lamp. Ah! but you have not been to Merret. Well, the bed is one of those old-world beds, with a high tester hung with flowered chintz. A small table stood by the bed, on which I saw an "Imitation of Christ," which, by the way, I bought for my wife, as well as the lamp. There were also a deep armchair for her confidential maid, and two small chairs. There was no fire in the large old-fashioned grate. That was all the furniture; not enough to fill ten lines in an inventory.

"'My dear sir, if you had seen, as I then saw, that vast room, papered and hung with brown, you would have felt yourself transported into a scene of a romance. It was icy; nay more, funereal,' and he lifted his hand with a theatrical gesture and paused.

"'By dint of seeking, as I approached the bed, at last I saw Madame de Merret, under the glimmer of the lamp, which fell on the pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax and as narrow as two folded hands. The Countess had a lace cap showing abundant hair, but as white as linen thread. She was sitting up in bed, and seemed to keep upright with great difficulty. Her large black eyes, dimmed by fever, no doubt, and half-dead already, hardly moved under the bony arch of her eyebrows. There,' he added, pointing to his own brow. 'Her forehead was clammy; her fleshless hands were like bones covered with soft skin; the veins and muscles were perfectly visible. She must have been very handsome; but at this moment I was startled into an indescribable emotion at the sight. Never, said those who wrapped her in her shroud, had any living creature been so emaciated and lived. In short, it was awful to behold! Sickness had so consumed that woman that she was no more than a phantom. Her

lips, which were pale violet, seemed to me not to move when she spoke to me.

"'Though my profession has familiarized me with such spectacles, by calling me not unfrequently to the bedside of the dying to record their last wishes, I confess that families in tears and the agonies I have seen were as nothing in comparison with this lonely and silent woman in her vast château. I heard not the least sound, I did not perceive the movement which the sufferer's breathing ought to have given to the sheets that covered her, and I stood motionless, absorbed in looking at her in a sort of stupor. In fancy I am there still. At last her large eyes moved; she tried to raise her right hand, but it fell back on the bed, and she uttered these words, which came like a breath, for her voice was no longer a voice: "I have waited for you with the greatest impatience." A bright flush rose to her cheeks. It was a great effort to her to speak.

"'"Madame," I began. She signed to me to be silent. At that moment the old housekeeper arose and said in my ear, "Do not speak; Madame la Comtesse is not in a state to bear the slightest noise, and what you would say might agitate her."

"'I sat down. A few instants after, Madame de Merret collected all her remaining strength to move her right hand and slipped it, not without infinite difficulty, under the bolster; she then paused a moment. With a last effort she withdrew her hand, and, when she brought out a sealed paper, drops of perspiration rolled from her brow. "I place my will in your hands. Oh! God! Oh!" and that was all. She clutched a crucifix that lay on the bed, lifted it hastily to her lips, and died.

"'The expression of her eyes still makes me shudder as I think of it. She must have suffered much! There was joy in her last glance, and it remained stamped on her dead eyes.

"'I brought away the will, and when it was opened I

found that Madame de Merret had appointed me her executor. She left the whole of her property to the hospital at Vendôme excepting a few legacies. But these were her instructions as relating to La Grande Bretêche: She ordered me to leave the place, for fifty years counting from the day of her death, in the state in which it might be at the time of her decease, forbidding any one, whoever he might be, to enter the apartments, prohibiting any repairs whatever, and even settling a salary to pay watchmen if it were needful to secure the absolute fulfillment of her intentions. At the expiration of that term, if the will of the testatrix has been duly carried out, the house is to become the property of my heirs, for, as you know, a notary cannot take a bequest. Otherwise La Grande Bretêche reverts to the heirs-at-law, but on condition of fulfilling certain conditions set forth in a codicil to the will, which is not to be opened until the expiration of the said term of fifty years. The will has not been disputed, so——' And without finishing his sentence, the lanky notary looked at me with an air of triumph; I made him quite happy by offering him my congratulations.

"'Monsieur,' I said in conclusion, 'you have so vividly impressed me that I fancy I see the dying woman whiter than her sheets: her glittering eyes frighten me; I shall dream of her to-night. But you must have formed some idea as to the instructions contained in that extraordinary will.'

"'Monsieur,' said he, with comical reticence, 'I never allow myself to criticise the conduct of a person who honors me with the gift of a diamond.'

"However, I soon loosened the tongue of the discreet notary of Vendôme, who communicated to me, not without long digressions, the opinions of the deep politicians of both sexes whose judgments are law in Vendôme. But these opinions were so contradictory, so diffuse, that I was near falling asleep in spite of the interest I felt in this authentic history. The notary's ponderous voice and monotonous accent, accus-

tomed no doubt to listen to himself and to make himself listened to by his clients or fellow-townsmen, were too much for my curiosity. Happily, he soon went away.

"'Ah, ha, monsieur,' said he on the stairs, 'a good many persons would be glad to live five-and-forty years longer; but —one moment!' and he laid the first finger of his right hand to his nostril with a cunning look, as much as to say, 'Mark my words! To last as long as that—as long as that, you must not be past sixty now.'

"I closed my door, having been roused from my apathy by this last speech, which the notary thought very funny; then I sat down in my armchair, with my feet on the fire-dogs. I had lost myself in a romance *à la* Radcliffe, constructed on the juridical base given me by Monsieur Regnault, when the door, opened by a woman's cautious hand, turned on the hinges. I saw my landlady come in, a buxom, florid dame, always good-humored, who had missed her calling in life. She was a Fleming, who ought to have seen the light in a picture by Teniers.

"'Well, monsieur,' said she, 'Monsieur Regnault has no doubt been giving you his history of La Grande Bretêche?'

"'Yes, Madame Lepas.'

"'And what did he tell you?'"

"I repeated in a few words the creepy and sinister story of Madame de Merret. At each sentence my hostess put her head forward, looking at me with an innkeeper's keen scrutiny, a happy compromise between the instinct of a police constable, the astuteness of a spy, and the cunning of a dealer.

"'My good Madame Lepas,' said I, as I ended, 'you seem to know more about it. Heh? If not, why have you come up to me?'

"'On my word as an honest woman——'

"'Do not swear; your eyes are big with a secret. You knew Monsieur de Merret; what sort of man was he?'

"'Monsieur de Merret—well, you see he was a man you never could see the top of, he was so tall! A very good gentleman, from Picardy, and who had, as we say, his head close to his cap. He paid for everything down, so as never to have difficulties with any one. He was hot-tempered, you see! All our ladies liked him very much.'

"'Because he was hot-tempered?' I asked her.

"'Well, may be,' she said; 'and you may suppose, sir, that a man had to have something to show for a figure-head before he could marry Madame de Merret, who, without any reflection on others, was the handsomest and richest heiress in our parts. She had about twenty thousand francs a year. All the town was at the wedding; the bride was pretty and sweet-looking, quite a gem of a woman. Oh, they were a handsome couple in their day!'

"'And were they happy together?'

"'Hm, hm! so-so—so far as can be guessed, for, as you may suppose, we of the common sort were not hail-fellow-well-met with them. Madame de Merret was a kind woman and very pleasant, who had no doubt sometimes to put up with her husband's tantrums. But though he was rather haughty, we were fond of him. After all, it was his place to behave so. When a man is a born nobleman, you see——'

"'Still, there must have been some catastrophe for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to part so violently?'

"'I did not say there was any catastrophe, sir. I know nothing about it.'

"'Indeed. Well, now, I am sure you know everything.'

"'Well, sir, I will tell you the whole story. When I saw Monsieur Regnault go up to see you, it struck me that he would speak to you about Madame de Merret as having to do with La Grande Bretêche. That put it into my head to ask your advice, sir, seeming to me that you are a man of good judgment and incapable of playing a poor woman like me false—for I never did any one a wrong and yet I am tor-

mented by my conscience. Up to now I have never dared to say a word to the people of these parts; they are all chattermags, with tongues like knives. And never till now, sir, have I had any traveler here who stayed so long in the inn as you have, and to whom I could tell the history of the fifteen thousand francs——'

"'My dear Madame Lepas, if there is anything in your story of a nature to compromise me,' I said, interrupting the flow of her words, 'I would not hear it for all the world.'

"'You need have no fears,' said she; 'you will see.'

"Her eagerness made me suspect that I was not the only person to whom my worthy landlady had communicated the secret of which I was to be sole possessor, but I listened.

"'Monsieur,' said she, 'when the Emperor sent the Spaniards here, prisoners of war and others, I was required to lodge at the charge of the government a young Spaniard sent to Vendôme on parole. Notwithstanding his parole, he had to show himself every day to the sub-prefect. He was a Spanish grandee—neither more nor less. He had a name in *os* and *dia*, something like Bagos de Férédia. I wrote his name down in my books, and you may see it if you like. Ah! he was a handsome young fellow for a Spaniard, who are all ugly, they say. He was not more than five feet two or three in height, but so well made; and he had little hands that he kept so beautifully! Ah! you should have seen them. He had as many brushes for his hands as a woman has for her toilet. He had thick, black hair, a flame in his eye, a somewhat coppery complexion, but which I admired all the same. He wore the finest linen I have ever seen, though I have had princesses to lodge here, and, among others, General Bertrand, the Duc and Duchesse d'Abrantés, Monsieur Descazes, and the King of Spain. He did not eat much, but he had such polite and amiable ways that it was impossible to owe him a grudge for that. Oh! I was very fond of him, though he did not say four words to me in a day, and it was impossi-

ble to have the least bit of talk with him; if he was spoken to, he did not answer; it is a way, a mania they all have, it would seem.

"'He read his breviary like a priest, and went to mass and all the services quite regularly. And where did he post himself?—we found this out later. Within two yards of Madame de Merret's chapel. As he took that place the very first time he entered the church no one imagined that there was any purpose in it. Beside, he never raised his nose above his book, poor young man! And then, monsieur, of an evening he went for a walk on the hill among the ruins of the old castle. It was his only amusement, poor man; it reminded him of his native land. They say that Spain is all hills!

"'One evening, a few days after he was sent here, he was out very late. I was rather uneasy when he did not come in till just on the stroke of midnight; but we all got used to his whims; he took the key of the door, and we never sat up for him. He lived in a house belonging to us in the Rue des Casernes. Well, then, one of our stable-boys told us one evening that, going down to wash the horses in the river, he fancied he had seen the Spanish grandee swimming some little way off, just like a fish. When he came in, I told him to be careful of the weeds, and he seemed put out at having been seen in the water.

"'At last, monsieur, one day, or rather one morning, we did not find him in his room; he had not come back. By hunting through his things, I found a written paper in the drawer of his table, with fifty pieces of Spanish gold of the kind they call doubloons, worth about five thousand francs; and in a little sealed box ten thousand francs' worth of diamonds. The paper said that in case he should not return, he left us this money and these diamonds in trust to found masses to thank God for his escape and for his salvation.

"'At that time I still had my husband, who ran off in search of him. And this is the queer part of the story: he

brought back the Spaniard's clothes, which he had found under a big stone on a sort of breakwater along the river-bank, nearly opposite La Grande Bretêche. My husband went so early that no one saw him. After reading the letter, he burned the clothes, and, in obedience to Count Férédia's wish, we announced that he had escaped.

"'The sub-prefect set all the constabulary at his heels; but, pshaw! he was never caught. Lepas believed that the Spaniard had drowned himself. I, sir, have never thought so; I believe, on the contrary, that he had something to do with the business about Madame de Merret, seeing that Rosalie told me that the crucifix her mistress was so fond of that she had it buried with her was made of ebony and silver; now in the early days of his stay here, Monsieur Férédia had one of ebony and silver which I never saw later. And now, monsieur, do not you say that I need have no remorse about the Spaniard's fifteen thousand francs? Are they not really and truly mine?'

"'Certainly. But have you never tried to question Rosalie?' I asked.

"'Oh, to be sure I have, sir. But what is to be done? That girl is like a wall. She knows something, but it is impossible to make her talk.'

"After chatting with me for a few minutes, my hostess left me a prey to vague and sinister thoughts, to romantic curiosity, and a religious dread, not unlike the deep emotion which comes upon us when we go into a dark church at night and discern a feeble light glimmering under a lofty vault—a dim figure glides across—the sweep of a gown or of a priest's cassock is audible—and we shiver! La Grande Bretêche, with its rank grasses, its shuttered windows, its rusty ironwork, its locked doors, its deserted rooms, suddenly rose before me in fantastic vividness. I tried to get into the mysterious dwelling to search out the heart of this solemn story, this drama which had killed three persons.

"Rosalie became in my eyes the most interesting being in Vendôme. As I studied her, I detected signs of an inmost thought, in spite of the blooming health that glowed in her dimpled face. There was in her soul some element of ruth or of hope; her manner suggested a secret, like the expression of devout souls who pray in excess, or of a girl who has killed her child and for ever hears its last cry. Nevertheless, she was simple and clumsy in her ways; her vacant smile had nothing criminal in it, and you would have pronounced her innocent only from seeing the large red and blue checked kerchief that covered her stalwart bust, tucked into the tight-laced square bodice of a lilac- and white-striped gown. 'No,' said I to myself, 'I will not quit Vendôme without knowing the whole history of La Grande Bretêche. To achieve this end, I will make love to Rosalie if it proves necessary.'

"'Rosalie!' said I, one evening.

"'Your servant, sir?'

"'You are not married?' She started a little.

"'Oh! there is no lack of men if ever I take a fancy to be miserable!' she replied, laughing. She got over her agitation at once; for every woman, from the highest lady to the inn-servant inclusive, has a native presence of mind.

"'Yes; you are fresh and good-looking enough never to lack lovers! But tell me, Rosalie, why did you become an inn-servant on leaving Madame de Merret? Did she not leave you some little annuity?'

"'Oh yes, sir. But my place here is the best in all the town of Vendôme.'

"This reply was such a one as judges and attorneys call evasive. Rosalie, as it seemed to me, held in this romantic affair the place of the middle square of the chess-board; she was at the very centre of the interest and of the truth; she appeared to me to be tied into the knot of it. It was not a case for ordinary love-making; this girl contained the last chapter of a romance, and from that moment all my attentions

were devoted to Rosalie. By dint of studying the girl, I observed in her, as in every woman whom we make our ruling thought, a variety of good qualities; she was clean and neat; she was handsome, I need not say; she soon was possessed of every charm that desire can lend to a woman in whatever rank of life. A fortnight after the notary's visit, one evening, or rather one morning, in the small hours, I said to Rosalie—

"'Come, tell me all you know about Madame de Merret.'

"'Oh!' she cried in terror, 'do not ask me that, Monsieur Horace!'

"Her handsome features clouded over, her bright coloring grew pale, and her eyes lost their artless, liquid brightness.

"'Well,' she said, 'I will tell you; but keep the secret carefully.'

"'All right, my child; I will keep all your secrets with a thief's honor, which is the most loyal known.'

"'If it is all the same to you,' she said, 'I would rather it should be with your own.'

"Thereupon she set her head-kerchief straight, and settled herself to tell the tale; for, there is no doubt, a particular attitude of confidence and security is necessary to the telling of a narrative. The best tales are told at a certain hour—just as we are all here at table. No one ever told a story well standing up or fasting.

"If I were to reproduce exactly Rosalie's diffuse eloquence, a whole volume would scarcely contain it. Now, as the event of which she gave me a confused account stands exactly midway between the notary's gossip and that of Madame Lepas, as precisely as the middle term of a rule-of-three sum stands between the first and third, I have only to relate it in as few words as may be. I shall therefore be brief:

"The room at La Grande Bretêche in which Madame de Merret slept was on the first floor; a little wardrobe in the wall, about four feet deep, served her to hang her dresses in.

Three months before the evening of which I have to relate the events, Madame de Merret had been seriously ailing, so much so that her husband had left her to herself, and had his own bedroom on the second floor. By one of those accidents which it is impossible to foresee, he came in that evening two hours later than usual from the club, where he went to read the papers and talk politics with the residents in the neighborhood. His wife supposed him to have come in, to be in bed and asleep. But the invasion of France had been the subject of a very animated discussion; the game of billiards had waxed vehement; he had lost forty francs, an enormous sum at Vendôme, where everybody is thrifty, and where social habits are restrained within the bounds of a simplicity worthy of all praise, and the foundation, perhaps, of a form of true happiness which no Parisian would care for.

"For some time past Monsieur de Merret had been satisfied to ask Rosalie whether his wife was in bed; on the girl's replying always in the affirmative, he at once went to his own room, with the good faith that comes of habit and confidence. But this evening, on coming in, he took it into his head to go to see Madame de Merret, to tell her of his ill-luck and perhaps to find consolation. During dinner he had observed that his wife was very becomingly dressed; he reflected as he came home from the club that his wife was certainly much better, that convalescence had improved her beauty, discovering it, as husbands discover everything, a little too late. Instead of calling Rosalie, who was in the kitchen at the moment watching the cook and the coachman playing a puzzling hand at cards, Monsieur de Merret made his way to his wife's room by the light of his lantern, which he set down on the lowest step of the stairs. His step, easy to recognize, rang under the vaulted passage.

"At the instant when the gentleman turned the key to enter his wife's room, he fancied he heard the door shut of the closet of which I have spoken; but, when he went in,

Madame de Merret was alone, standing in front of the fireplace. The unsuspecting husband fancied that Rosalie was in the cupboard; nevertheless, a doubt, ringing in his ears like a peal of bells, put him on his guard; he looked at his wife and read in her eyes an indescribably anxious and hunted expression.

"'You are very late,' she said. Her voice, usually so clear and sweet, struck him as being slightly husky.

"Monsieur de Merret made no reply, for at this moment Rosalie came in. This was like a thunderclap. He walked up and down the room, going from one window to another at a regular pace, his arms folded.

"'Have you had bad news or are you ill?' his wife asked him timidly, while Rosalie helped her to undress. He made no reply.

"'You can go, Rosalie,' said Madame de Merret to her maid; 'I can put in my curl-papers myself.' She scented disaster at the mere aspect of her husband's face, and wished to be alone with him. As soon as Rosalie was gone, or supposed to be gone, for she lingered a few minutes in the passage, Monsieur de Merret came and stood facing his wife, and said coldly, 'Madame, there is some one in your cupboard!' She looked at her husband calmly, and replied quite simply, 'No, monsieur.'

"This 'No' wrung Monsieur de Merret's heart; he did not believe it; and yet his wife had never appeared purer and more saintly than she seemed to be at this moment. He rose to go and open the closet door. Madame de Merret took his hand, stopped him, looked at him sadly, and said in a voice of strange emotion, 'Remember, if you should find no one there, everything must be at an end between you and me.'

"The extraordinary dignity of his wife's attitude filled him with deep esteem for her and inspired him with one of those resolves which need only a grander stage to become immortal.

"'No, Josephine,' he said, 'I will not open it. In either

event we should be parted for ever. Listen; I know all the purity of your soul, I know you lead a saintly life, and would not commit a deadly sin to save your life.' At these words Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a haggard stare—'See, here is your crucifix,' he went on. 'Swear to me before God that there is no one in there; I will believe you—I will never open that door.'

"Madame de Merret took up the crucifix and said, 'I swear it.'

"'Louder,' said her husband; 'and repeat: I swear before God that there is nobody in that closet.' She repeated the words without flinching.

"'That will do,' said Monsieur de Merret coldly. After a moment's silence: 'You have there a fine piece of work which I never saw before,' said he, examining the crucifix of ebony and silver, very artistically wrought.

"'I found it at Duvivier's; last year when that troop of Spanish prisoners came through Vendôme, he bought it of a Spanish monk.'

"'Indeed,' said Monsieur de Merret, hanging the crucifix on its nail; and he rang the bell.

"He had not to wait for Rosalie. Monsieur de Merret went forward quickly to meet her, led her into the bay of the window that looked on to the garden, and said to her in an undertone—

"'I know that Gorenflot wants to marry you, that poverty alone prevents your setting up house, and that you told him you would not be his wife until he found means to become a master mason. Well, go and fetch him; tell him to come here with his trowel and tools. Contrive to wake no one in his house but himself. His reward will be beyond your wishes. Above all, go out without saying a word—or else!' and he frowned.

"Rosalie was going, and he called her back. 'Here, take my latch-key,' said he.

"'Jean!' Monsieur de Merret called in a voice of thunder down the passage. Jean, who was both coachman and confidential servant, left his cards and came.

"'Go to bed, all of you,' said his master, beckoning him to come close; and the gentleman added in a whisper, 'When they are all asleep—mind, *asleep*—you understand?—come down and tell me.'

"Monsieur de Merret, who had never lost sight of his wife while giving his orders, quietly came back to her at the fireside and began to tell her the details of the game of billiards and the discussion at the club. When Rosalie returned she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret conversing amiably.

"Not long before this Monsieur de Merret had had new ceilings made to all the reception-rooms on the first floor. Plaster is very scarce at Vendôme; the price is enhanced by the cost of carriage; the gentleman had therefore had a considerable quantity delivered to him, knowing that he could always find purchasers for what might be left. It was this circumstance which suggested the plan he carried out.

"'Gorenflot is here, sir,' said Rosalie in a whisper.

"'Tell him to come in,' said her master aloud.

"Madame de Merret turned paler when she saw the mason.

"'Gorenflot,' said her husband, 'go and fetch some bricks from the coach-house; bring enough to wall up the door of this cupboard; you can use the plaster that is left for cement.' Then, dragging Rosalie and the workman close to him—'Listen, Gorenflot,' said he, in a low voice, 'you are to sleep here to-night; but to-morrow morning you shall have a passport to take you abroad to a place I will tell you of. I will give you six thousand francs for your journey. You must live in that town for ten years; if you find you do not like it, you may settle in another, but it must be in the same country. Go through Paris and wait there till I join you. I will there give you an agreement for six thousand francs more, to be paid to you on your return, provided you have carried out

the conditions of the bargain. For that price you are to keep perfect silence as to what you have to do this night. To you, Rosalie, I will secure ten thousand francs, which will not be paid to you until your wedding-day, and on condition of your marrying Gorenflot; but, to get married, you must hold your tongue. If not, no wedding-gift!'

"'Rosalie,' said Madame de Merret, 'come and brush my hair.'

"Her husband quietly walked up and down the room, keeping an eye on the door, on the mason, and on his wife, but without any insulting display of suspicion. Gorenflot could not help making some noise. Madame de Merret seized a moment when he was unloading some bricks, and when her husband was at the other end of the room, to say to Rosalie: 'My dear child, I will give you a thousand francs a year if only you will tell Gorenflot to leave a crack at the bottom.' Then she added aloud quite coolly: 'You had better help him.'

"Monsieur and Madame de Merret were silent all the time while Gorenflot was walling up the door. This silence was intentional on the husband's part; he did not wish to give his wife the opportunity of saying anything with a double meaning. On Madame de Merret's side it was pride or prudence. When the wall was half built up the cunning mason took advantage of his master's back being turned to break one of the two panes in the top of the door with a blow of his pick. By this Madame de Merret understood that Rosalie had spoken to Gorenflot. They all three then saw the face of a dark, gloomy-looking man, with black hair and flaming eyes.

"Before her husband turned round again the poor woman had nodded to the stranger, to whom the signal was meant to convey, 'Hope.'

"At four o'clock, as day was dawning, for it was the month of September, the work was done. The mason was

placed in charge of Jean, and Monsieur de Merret slept in his wife's room.

"Next morning when he got up he said with apparent carelessness, 'Oh, by the way, I must go to the mayor for the passport.' He put on his hat, took two or three steps toward the door, paused, and took the crucifix. His wife was trembling with joy.

"'He will go to Duvivier's,' thought she.

"As soon as he had left, Madame de Merret rang for Rosalie, and then in a terrible voice she cried: 'The pick! Bring the pick! and set to work. I saw how Gorenflot did it yesterday; we shall have time to make a gap and build it up again.'

"In an instant Rosalie had brought her mistress a sort of cleaver; she, with a vehemence of which no words can give an idea, set to work to demolish the wall. She had already gotten out a few bricks, when, turning to deal a stronger blow than before, she saw behind her Monsieur de Merret. She fainted away.

"'Lay madame on her bed,' he said coldly.

"Foreseeing what would certainly happen in his absence, he had laid this trap for his wife; he had merely written to the mayor and sent for Duvivier. The jeweler arrived just as the disorder in the room had been repaired.

"'Duvivier,' asked Monsieur de Merret, 'did you not buy some crucifixes of the Spaniards who passed through the town?'

"'No, monsieur.'

"'Very good; thank you,' said he, flashing a tiger's glare at his wife. 'Jean,' he added, turning to his confidential valet, 'you can serve my meals here in Madame de Merret's room. She is ill, and I shall not leave her until she recovers.'

"The cruel man remained in his wife's room for twenty days. During the earlier time, when there was some little

noise in the closet, and Josephine wanted to intercede for the dying man, he said, without allowing her to utter a word, 'You swore on the cross that there was no one in there.' ''

After this story all the ladies arose from the table, and thus the spell under which Bianchon had held them was broken. But there were some among them who had almost shivered at the last words.

A MAN OF BUSINESS.

Translated by ELLEN MARRIAGE.

To Monsieur le Baron James de Rothschild, Banker and Austrian Consul-General at Paris.

THE word *lorette* is a euphemism invented to describe the status of a personage, or a personage of a status, of which it is awkward to speak; the French Académie, in its modesty, having omitted to supply a definition out of regard for the age of its forty members. Whenever a new word comes in to supply the place of an unwieldy circumlocution, its fortune is assured; the word *lorette* has passed into the language of every class of society, even where the lorette herself will never gain an entrance. It was only invented in 1840, and derived beyond a doubt from the agglomeration of such swallows' nests about the church of Our Lady of Loretto. This information is for etymologists only. Those gentlemen would not be so often in a quandary if mediæval writers had only taken such pains with details of contemporary manners as we take in these days of analysis and description.

Mlle. Turquet, or Malaga, for she is better known by her pseudonym,* was one of the earliest parishioners of that charming church. At the time to which this story belongs, that light-hearted and lively damsel gladdened the existence of a notary with a wife somewhat too bigoted, rigid, and frigid for domestic happiness.

Now, it so fell out that one carnival evening Master Cardot was entertaining guests at Mlle. Turquet's house—Desroches the attorney, Bixiou of the caricatures, Lousteau the jour-

* See "The Imaginary Mistress."

nalist, Nathan, and others; it is quite unnecessary to give any further description of these personages, all bearers of illustrious names in the "Comédie Humaine." Young La Palférine, in spite of his title of Count and his great descent, which, alas! means a great descent in fortune likewise, had honored the notary's little establishment with his presence.

At dinner, in such a house, one does not expect to meet the patriarchal beef, the skinny fowl and salad of domestic and family life, nor is there any attempt at the hypocritical conversation of drawing-rooms furnished with highly respectable matrons. When, alas! will respectability be charming? When will the women in good society vouchsafe to show rather less of their shoulders and rather more wit or geniality? Marguerite Turquet, the Aspasia of the Cirque-Olympique, is one of those frank, very living personalities to whom all is forgiven, such unconscious sinners are they, such intelligent penitents; of such as Malaga one might ask, like Cardot—a witty man enough, albeit a notary—to be well "deceived." And yet you must not think that any enormities were committed. Desroches and Cardot were good fellows grown too gray in the profession not to feel at ease with Bixiou, Lousteau, Nathan, and young La Palférine. And they on their side had too often had recourse to their legal advisers and knew them too well to try to "draw them out," in lorette language.

Conversation, perfumed with seven cigars, at first was as fantastic as a kid let loose, but finally it settled down upon the strategy of the constant war waged in Paris between creditors and debtors.

Now, if you will be so good as to recall the history and antecedents of the guests, you will know that in all Paris you could scarcely find a group of men with more experience in this matter; the professional men on one hand and the artists on the other were something in the position of magistrates and criminals hobnobbing together. A set of Bixiou's

drawings to illustrate life in the debtors' prison led the conversation to take this particular turn; and from debtors' prisons they went to debts.

It was midnight. They had broken up into little knots around the table and before the fire, and gave themselves up to the burlesque fun which is only possible or comprehensible in Paris and in that particular region which is bounded by the Faubourg Montmartre, the Rue Chaussée d'Antin, the upper end of the Rue de Navarin and the line of the boulevards.

In ten minutes' time they had come to an end of all the deep reflections, all the moralizings, small and great, all the bad puns made on a subject already exhausted by Rabelais three hundred and fifty years ago. It is not a little to their credit that the pyrotechnic display was cut short with a final squib from Malaga.

"It all goes to the shoemakers," she said. "I left a milliner because she failed twice with my hats. The vixen has been here twenty-seven times to ask for twenty francs. She did not know that we never have twenty francs. One has a thousand francs, or one sends to one's notary for five hundred; but twenty francs I have never had in my life. My cook and my maid may, perhaps, have so much between them; but for my own part, I have nothing but credit, and I should lose that if I took to borrowing small sums. If I were to ask for twenty francs, I should have nothing to distinguish me from my colleagues that walk the boulevard."

"Is the milliner paid?" asked La Palférine.

"Oh, come now, are you turning stupid?" she said, with a wink. "She came this morning for the twenty-seventh time, that is how I came to mention it."

"What did you do?" asked Desroches.

"I took pity upon her, and—ordered a little hat that I have just invented, a quite new shape. If Mademoiselle Amanda succeeds with it, she will say no more about the money, her fortune is made."

"In my opinion," put in Desroches, "the finest things that I have seen in a duel of this kind give those who know Paris a far better picture of the city than all the fancy portraits that they paint. Some of you think that you know a thing or two," he continued, glancing round at Nathan, Bixiou, La Palférine, and Lousteau, "but the king of the ground is a certain Count, now busy ranging himself. In his time, he was supposed to be the cleverest, adroitest, canniest, boldest, stoutest, most subtle, and experienced of all the pirates, who, equipped with fine manners, yellow kid gloves, and cabs, have ever sailed or ever will sail upon the stormy sea of Paris. He fears neither God nor man. He applies in private life the principles that guide the English cabinet. Up to the time of his marriage, his life was one continual war, like—Lousteau's, for instance. I was and am still his attorney."

"And the first letter of his name is Maxime de Trailles," said La Palférine.

"For that matter, he has paid every one and injured no one," continued Desroches. "But as our friend Bixiou was saying just now, it is a violation of the liberty of the subject to be made to pay in March when you have no mind to pay till October. By virtue of this article of his particular code, Maxime regarded a creditor's scheme for making him pay at once as a swindler's trick. It was long since he had grasped the significance of the bill of exchange in all its bearings, direct and remote. A young man once, in my place, called a bill of exchange the 'asses' bridge' in his hearing. 'No,' said he, 'it is the Bridge of Sighs; it is the shortest way to an execution.' Indeed, his knowledge of commercial law was so complete that a professional could not have taught him anything. At that time he had nothing, as you know. His carriage and horses were jobbed; he lived in his valet's house; and, by the way, he will be a hero to his valet to the end of the chapter, even after the marriage that he proposes to make. He belonged to three clubs, and dined at one of

them whenever he did not dine out. As a rule, he was to be found very seldom at his own address——"

"He once said to me," interrupted la Palférine, "'My own affectation is the pretense that I make of living in the Rue Pigalle.'"

"Well," resumed Desroches, "he was one of the combatants; and now for the other. You have heard more or less talk of one Claparon?"

"Had hair like this!" cried Bixiou, ruffling his locks till they stood on end. Gifted with the same talent for mimicking absurdities which Chopin the pianist possesses to so high a degree, he proceeded forthwith to represent the character with startling truth.

"He rolls his head like this when he speaks; he was once a commercial traveler; he has been all sorts of things——"

"Well, he was born to travel, for at this minute, as I speak, he is on the sea on his way to America," said Desroches. "It is his only chance, for in all probability he will be condemned by default as a fraudulent bankrupt next session."

"Very much at sea!" exclaimed Malaga.

"For six or seven years this Claparon acted as man of straw, cat's-paw, and scapegoat to two friends of ours, du Tillet and Nucingen; but in 1829 his part was so well known that——"

"Our friends dropped him," put in Bixiou.

"They left him to his fate at last, and he wallowed in the mire," continued Desroches. "In 1833 he went into partnership with one Cérizet——"

"What! he that promoted a joint-stock company so nicely that the Sixth Chamber cut short his career with a couple of years in jail?" asked the lorette.

"The same. Under the restoration, between 1823 and 1827, Cérizet's occupation consisted in first putting his name intrepidly to various paragraphs, on which the public prosecutor fastened with avidity, and subsequently marching him off to

prison. A man could make a name for himself with small expense in those days. The liberal party called their provincial champion 'the courageous Cérizet,' and toward 1828 so much zeal received its reward in 'general interest.'

"'General interest' is a kind of civic crown bestowed on the deserving by the daily press. Cérizet tried to discount the 'general interest' taken in him. He came to Paris, and, with some help from capitalists in the opposition, started as a broker, and conducted financial operations to some extent, the capital being found by a man in hiding, a skillful gambler who overreached himself, and in consequence, in July, 1830, his capital foundered in the shipwreck of the government."

"Oh! it was he whom we used to call the System," cried Bixiou.

"Say no harm of him, poor fellow," protested Malaga. "D'Estourny was a good sort."

"You can imagine the part that a ruined man was sure to play in 1830 when his name in politics was 'the courageous Cérizet.' He was sent off into a very snug little sub-prefecture. Unluckily for him, it is one thing to be in opposition —any missile is good enough to throw, so long as the fight lasts; but quite another to be in office. Three months later he was obliged to send in his resignation. Had he not taken it into his head to attempt to win popularity? Still, as he had done nothing as yet to imperil his title of 'courageous Cérizet,' the government proposed by way of compensation that he should manage a newspaper; nominally an opposition paper, but ministerialist *in petto*. So the fall of this noble nature was really due to the government. To Cérizet, as manager of the paper, it was rather too evident that he was as a bird perched on a rotten bough; and then it was that he promoted that nice little joint-stock company and thereby secured a couple of years in prison; he was caught, while more ingenious swindlers succeeded in catching the public."

"We are acquainted with the more ingenious," said Bixiou;

"let us say no ill of the poor fellow; he was nabbed; Couture allowed them to squeeze his cash-box; who would ever have thought it of him?"

"At all events, Cérizet was a low sort of fellow, a good deal damaged by low debauchery. Now for the duel I spoke about. Never did two tradesmen of the worst type, with the worst manners, the lowest pair of villains imaginable, go into partnership in a dirtier business. Their stock-in-trade consisted of the peculiar idiom of the man about town, the audacity of poverty, the cunning that comes of experience, and a special knowledge of Parisian capitalists, their origin, connections, acquaintances, and intrinsic value. This partnership of two 'dabblers' (let the stock exchange term pass, for it is the only word which describes them), this partnership of dabblers did not last very long. They fought like famished curs over every bit of garbage.

"The earlier speculations of the firm of Cérizet and Claparon were, however, well planned. The two scamps joined forces with Barbet, Chaboisseau, Samanon, and usurers of that stamp and bought up hopelessly bad debts.

"Claparon's place of business at that time was a cramped entresol in the Rue Chabannais—five rooms at a rent of seven hundred francs at most. Each partner slept in a little closet, so carefully closed from prudence that my head clerk could never get inside. The furniture of the other three rooms—an antechamber, a waiting-room, and a private office—would not have fetched three hundred francs altogether at a distress-warrant sale. You know enough of Paris to know the look of it; the stuffed horsehair-covered chairs, a table covered with a green cloth, a trumpery clock between a couple of candle sconces, growing tarnished under glass shades, the small gilt-framed mirror over the chimney-piece, and in the grate a charred stick or two of firewood which had lasted them for two winters, as my head clerk put it. As for the office, you can guess what it was like—more letter-files than

business letters, a set of common pigeon-holes for either partner, a cylinder desk, empty as the cash-box, in the middle of the room, and a couple of armchairs on either side of a coal fire. The carpet on the floor was bought cheap at second-hand (like the bills and bad debts). In short, it was the mahogany furniture of furnished apartments which usually descends from one occupant of chambers to another during fifty years of service. Now you know the pair of antagonists

"During the first three months of a partnership dissolved four months later in a bout of fisticuffs, Cérizet and Claparon bought up two thousand francs' worth of bills bearing Maxime's signature (since Maxime is his name), and filled a couple of letter-files to bursting with judgments, appeals, orders of the court, distress-warrants, application for stay of proceedings, and all the rest of it; to put it briefly, they had bills for three thousand two hundred francs odd centimes, for which they had given five hundred francs; the transfer being made under private seal, with special power of attorney, to save the expense of registration. Now it so happened at this juncture, Maxime, being of ripe age, was seized with one of the fancies peculiar to the man of fifty——"

"Antonia!" exclaimed La Palférine. "That Antonia whose fortune I made by writing to ask for a tooth-brush!"

"Her real name is Chocardelle," said Malaga, not over well pleased by the fine-sounding pseudonym.

"The same," continued Desroches.

"It was the only mistake Maxime ever made in his life. But what would you have, no vice is absolutely perfect?" put in Bixiou.

"Maxime had still to learn what sort of a life a man may be led into by a girl of eighteen when she is minded to take a header from her honest garret into a sumptuous carriage; it is a lesson that all statesmen should take to heart. At this time, de Marsay had just been employing his friend, our friend de Trailles, in the high comedy of politics. Maxime

had looked high for his conquests; he had no experience of untitled women; and at fifty years he felt that he had a right to take a bite of a little so-called wild fruit, much as a sportsman will halt under a peasant's apple tree. So the Count found a reading-room for Mademoiselle Chocardelle, a rather smart little place to be had cheap, as usual——"

"Pooh!" said Nathan. "She did not stay in it six months. She was too handsome to keep a reading-room."

"Perhaps you are the father of her child?" suggested the lorette.

Desroches resumed:

"Since the firm bought up Maxime's debts, Cérizet's likeness to a bailiff's officer grew more and more striking, and one morning after seven fruitless attempts he succeeded in penetrating into the Count's presence. Suzon, the old manservant, albeit he was by no means in his novitiate, at last mistook the visitor for a petitioner, come to propose a thousand crowns if Maxime would obtain a license to sell postage stamps for a young lady. Suzon, without the slightest suspicion of the little scamp, a thoroughbred Paris street-boy into whom prudence had been rubbed by repeated personal experience of the police courts, induced his master to receive him. Can you see the man of business, with an uneasy eye, a bald forehead, and scarcely any hair on his head, standing in his threadbare jacket and muddy shoes——"

"What a picture of a dun!" cried Lousteau.

"Standing before the Count, that image of flaunting debt, in his blue flannel dressing-gown, slippers worked by some marquise or other, trousers of white woollen stuff, and a dazzling shirt? There he stood, with a gorgeous cap on his black dyed hair, playing with the tassels at his waist——"

"'Tis a bit of genre for anybody who knows the pretty little morning room, hung with silk and full of valuable paintings, where Maxime breakfasts," said Nathan. "You tread on a Smyrna carpet, you admire the sideboards filled with

curiosities, ornaments, and rarities fit to make a King of Saxony envious——"

"Now for the scene itself," said Desroches, and the deepest silence followed.

"'Monsieur le Comte,' began Cérizet, 'I have come from a Monsieur Charles Claparon, who used to be a banker——'

"'Ah! poor devil, and what does he want with me?'

"'Well, he is at present your creditor for a matter of three thousand two hundred francs, seventy-five centimes, principal, interest, and costs——'

"'Coutelier's business?' put in Maxime, who knew his affairs as a pilot knows his coast.

"'Yes, Monsieur le Comte,' said Cérizet with a bow. 'I have come to ask your intentions.'

"'I shall only pay when the fancy takes me,' returned Maxime, and he rang for Suzon. 'It was very rash of Claparon to buy up bills of mine without speaking to me beforehand. I am sorry for him, for he did so very well for such a long time as a man of straw for friends of mine. I always said that a man must really be weak in his intellect to work for men that stuff themselves with millions, and to serve them so faithfully for such low wages. And now here he gives me another proof of his stupidity! Yes, men deserve what they get. It is your own doing whether you get a crown on your forehead or a bullet through your head; whether you are a millionaire or a porter, justice is always done you. I cannot help it, my dear fellow; I myself am not a king, I stick to my principles. I have no pity for those that put me to expense or do not know their business as creditors. Suzon! my tea! Do you see this gentleman?' he continued when the man came in. 'Well, you have allowed yourself to be taken in, poor old boy. This gentleman is a creditor; you ought to have known him by his shoes. No friend nor foe of mine, nor those that are neither and want something of me, come to see me on foot. My dear

Monsieur Cérizet, do you understand? You will not wipe your shoes on my carpet again' (looking as he spoke at the mud that whitened the enemy's soles). 'Convey my compliments and sympathy to Claparon, poor buffer, for I shall file this business under the letter Z.'

"All this with an easy good-humor fit to give a virtuous citizen the colic.

" 'You are wrong, Monsieur le Comte,' retorted Cérizet, in a slightly peremptory tone. 'We shall be paid in full, and that in a way which you may not like. That was why I came to you first in a friendly spirit, as is right and fit between gentlemen——'

" 'Oh! so that is how you understand it?' began Maxime, enraged by this last piece of presumption. There was something of Talleyrand's wit in the insolent retort, if you have quite grasped the contrast between the two men and their costumes. Maxime scowled and looked full at the intruder; Cérizet not merely endured the glare of cold fury, but even returned it, with an icy, cat-like malignance and fixity of gaze.

" 'Very good, sir, go out——'

" 'Very well, good-day, Monsieur le Comte. We shall be quits before six months are out.'

" 'If you can steal the amount of your bill, which is legally due I own, I shall be indebted to you, sir,' replied Maxime. 'You will have taught me a new precaution to take. I am very much your servant.'

" 'Monsieur le Comte,' said Cérizet, 'it is I, on the contrary, who am yours.'

"Here was an explicit, forcible, confident declaration on either side. A couple of tigers confabulating, with the prey before them and a fight impending, would have been no finer and no shrewder than this pair; the insolent fine gentleman as great a blackguard as the other in his soiled and mud-stained clothes.

"Which will you lay your money on?" asked Desroches, looking round at an audience, surprised to find how deeply it was interested.

"A pretty story!" cried Malaga. "My dear boy, go on, I beg of you. This goes to one's heart."

"Nothing commonplace could happen between two fighting-cocks of that calibre," added La Palférine.

"Pooh!" cried Malaga, "I will wager my cabinet-maker's invoice (the fellow is dunning me) that the little toad was too many for Maxime."

"I bet on Maxime," said Cardot. "Nobody ever caught him napping."

Desroches drank off a glass that Malaga handed to him.

"Mademoiselle Chocardelle's reading-room," he continued, after a pause, "was in the Rue Coquenard, just a step or two from the Rue Pigalle where Maxime was living. The said Chocardelle lived at the back on the garden-side of the house, beyond a big, dark place where the books were kept. Antonia left her aunt to look after the business——"

"Had she an aunt even then?" exclaimed Malaga. "Hang it all, Maxime did things handsomely."

"Alas! it was a real aunt," said Desroches; "her name was—let me see——"

"Ida Bonamy," said Bixiou.

"So as Antonia's aunt took a good deal of the work off her hands, she went to bed late and lay late of a morning, never showing her face at the desk until the afternoon, some time between two and four. From the very first her appearance was enough to draw custom. Several elderly men in the quarter used to come, among them a retired coach-builder, one Croizeau. Beholding this miracle of female loveliness through the window-panes, he took it into his head to read the newspapers in the beauty's reading-room; and a sometime custom-house officer, named Denisart, with a ribbon in his button-hole, followed the example. Croizeau chose to look

upon Denisart as a rival. '*Môsieur*,' he said afterward, 'I did not know what to buy for you!'

"That speech should give you an idea of the man. The Sieur Croizeau happens to belong to a particular class of old man which should be known as 'Coquerels' since Henri Monnier's time; so well did Monnier render the piping voice, the little mannerisms, little queue, little sprinkling of powder, little movements of the head, prim little manner, and tripping gait in the part of Coquerel in 'La Famille Improvisée.' This Croizeau used to hand over his halfpence with a flourish and a 'There, fair lady!'

"Madame Ida Bonamy the aunt was not long in finding out through the servant that Croizeau, by popular report of the neighborhood of the Rue de Buffault, where he lived, was a man of exceeding stinginess, possessed of forty thousand francs per annum. A week after the installment of the charming librarian he was delivered of a pun—

"'You lend me books (*livres**), but I give you plenty of francs in return,' he said.

"A few days later he put on a knowing little air, as much as to say, 'I know you are engaged, but my turn will come one day; I am a widower.'

"He always came arrayed in fine linen, a cornflower blue coat, a paduasoy waistcoat, black trousers, and black ribbon bows on the double-soled shoes that creaked like an abbé's; he always held a fourteen-franc silk hat in his hand.

"'I am old and I have no children,' he took occasion to confide to the young lady some few days after Cérizet's visit to Maxime. 'I hold my relations in horror. They are peasants born to work in the fields. Just imagine it, I came up from the country with six francs in my pocket, and made my fortune here. I am not proud. A pretty woman is my equal. Now would it not be nicer to be Madame Croizeau for some years to come than to do a Count's pleasure for a twelvemonth?

* Livre: masculine, book; feminine, franc.

He will go off and leave you some time or other; and when that day comes, you will think of me—your servant, my pretty lady!'

"All this was simmering below the surface. The slightest approach at love-making was made quite on the sly. Not a soul suspected that the trim little old fogey was smitten with Antonia; and so prudent was the elderly lover, that no rival could have guessed anything from his behavior in the reading-room. For a couple of months Croizeau watched the retired custom-house official; but before the third month was out he had good reason to believe that his suspicions were groundless. He exerted his ingenuity to scrape an acquaintance with Denisart, came up with him in the street, and at length seized his opportunity to remark, 'It is a fine day, sir!'

"Whereupon the retired official responded with, 'Austerlitz weather, sir. I was there myself—I was wounded indeed; I won my cross on that glorious day.'

"And so from one thing to another the two drifted wrecks of the empire struck up an acquaintance. Little Croizeau was attached to the empire through his connection with Napoleon's sisters. He had been their coach-builder, and had frequently dunned them for money; so he gave out that he 'had had relations with the imperial family.' Maxime, duly informed by Antonia of the 'nice old man's' proposals (for so the aunt called Croizeau), wished to see him. Cérizet's declaration of war had so far taken effect that he of the yellow kid gloves was studying the position of every piece, however insignificant, upon the board; and it so happened that at the mention of that 'nice old man,' an ominous tinkling sounded in his ears. One evening, therefore, Maxime seated himself among the bookshelves in the dimly lighted back room, reconnoitred the seven or eight customers through the chink between the green curtains, and took the little coach-builder's measure. He gauged the man's infatuation, and was very well satisfied to find that the varnished doors of a tolerably

sumptuous future were ready to turn at a word from Antonia so soon as his own fancy had passed off.

"'And that other one yonder?' he asked, pointing out the stout, fine-looking elderly man with the cross of the Legion of Honor. 'Who is he?'

"'A retired custom-house officer.'

"'The cut of his countenance is not reassuring,' said Maxime, beholding the Sieur Denisart.

"And, indeed, the old soldier held himself upright as a steeple. His head was remarkable for the amount of powder and pomatum bestowed upon it; he looked almost like a postillion at a fancy ball. Underneath that felted covering, moulded to the top of the wearer's cranium, appeared an elderly profile, half-official, half-soldierly, with a comical admixture of arrogance, altogether something like caricatures of the 'Constitutionnel.' The sometime official finding that age, and hair-powder, and the conformation of his spine made it impossible to read a word without spectacles, sat displaying a very creditable expanse of chest with all the pride of an old man with a mistress. Like old General Montcornet, that pillar of the Vaudeville, he wore ear-rings. Denisart was partial to blue; his roomy trousers and well-worn great-coat were both of blue cloth.

"'How long is it since that old fogey came here?' inquired Maxime, thinking that he saw danger in the spectacles.

"'Oh, from the beginning,' returned Antonia, 'pretty nearly two months ago now.'

"'Good,' said Maxime to himself, 'Cérizet only came to me a month ago. Just get him to talk,' he added in Antonia's ear; 'I want to hear his voice.'

"'Pshaw,' she replied, 'that is not so easy. He never says a word to me.'

"'Then why does he come here?' demanded Maxime.

"'For a queer reason,' returned the fair Antonia. 'In the first place, although he is sixty-nine, he has a fancy; and be-

cause he is sixty-nine, he is as methodical as a clock-face. Every day at five o'clock the old gentleman goes to dine with *her* in the Rue de la Victoire. (I am sorry for her.) Then at six o'clock he comes here, reads steadily at the papers for four hours, and goes back at ten o'clock. Daddy Croizeau says that he knows Monsieur Denisart's motives, and approves his conduct; and, in his place, he would do the same. So I know exactly what to expect. If ever I am Madame Croizeau, I shall have four hours to myself between six and ten o'clock.'

"Maxime looked through the directory and found the following reassuring item:

"'DENISART, * retired custom-house officer, Rue de la Victoire.'

"His uneasiness vanished.

"Gradually the Sieur Denisart and the Sieur Croizeau began to exchange confidences. Nothing so binds two men together as a similarity of views in the matter of womankind. Daddy Croizeau went to dine with 'Monsieur Denisart's fair lady,' as he called her. And here I must make a somewhat important observation.

"The reading-room had been paid for half in cash, half in bills signed by the said Mlle. Chocardelle. The *quart d'heure de Rabelais* (Rabelais' 'instant of action') arrived; the Count had no money. So the first bill of three thousand-franc bills was met by the amiable coach-builder; that old scoundrel Denisart having recommended him to secure himself with a mortgage on the reading-room.

"'For my own part,' said Denisart, 'I have seen pretty doings from pretty women. So, in all cases, even when I have lost my head, I am always on my guard with a woman. There is this creature, for instance; I am madly in love with her; but this is not her furniture; no, it belongs to me. The lease is taken out in my name.'

"You know Maxime! He thought the coach-builder uncommonly green. Croizeau might pay all three bills, and get

nothing for a long while; for Maxime felt more infatuated with Antonia than ever."

"I can well believe it," said La Palférine. "She is the *bellæ imperia* (imperial beauty) of our day."

"With her rough skin?" exclaimed Malaga; "so rough, that she ruins herself in bran baths?"

"Croizeau spoke with a coach-builder's admiration of the sumptuous furniture provided by the amorous Denisart as a setting for his fair one, describing it all in detail with diabolical complacency for Antonia's benefit," continued Desroches. "The ebony chests inlaid with mother-of-pearl and gold wire, the Brussels carpets, a mediæval bedstead worth three thousand francs, a boule clock, candelabra in the four corners of the dining-room, silk curtains, on which Chinese patience had wrought pictures of birds, and hangings over the doors, worth more than the portress that opened them.

"'And that is what *you* ought to have, my pretty lady. And that is what I should like to offer you,' he would conclude. 'I am quite aware that you scarcely care a bit about me; but, at my age, we cannot expect too much. Judge how much I love you; I have lent you a thousand francs. I must confess that, in all my born days, I have not lent anybody *that* much——'

"He held out his penny as he spoke, with the important air of a man that gives a learned demonstration.

"That same evening at the Variétés, Antonia spoke to the Count.

"'A reading-room is very dull, all the same,' said she; 'I feel that I have no sort of taste for that kind of life, and I see no future in it. It is only fit for a widow that wishes to keep body and soul together, or for some hideously ugly thing that fancies she can catch a husband with a little finery.'

"'It was your own choice,' returned the Count. Just at that moment in came Nucingen, of whom Maxime, king of lions (the 'yellow kid gloves' were the lions of that day), had

won three thousand francs the evening before. Nucingen had come to pay his gaming debt.

"'Ein writ of attachment haf shoost peen served on me by der order of dot teufel Glabaron,' he said, seeing Maxime's astonishment.

"'Oh, so that is how they are going to work, is it?' cried Maxime. 'They are not up to much, that pair——'

"'It makes not,' said the banker, 'bay dem, for dey may apply demselfs to oders pesides, und do you harm. I dake dees bretty voman to vitness dot I haf baid you dees morning, long pefore dat writ was serfed.'"

"Queen of the boards," smiled La Palférine, looking at Malaga, "thou art about to lose thy bet."

"Once, a long time ago, in a similar case, resumed Desroches, a too honest debtor took fright at the idea of a solemn declaration in a court of law, and declined to pay Maxime after notice was given. That time we made it hot for the creditor by piling on writs of attachment, so as to absorb the whole amount in costs——"

"Oh, what is that?" cried Malaga; "it all sounds like gibberish to me. As you thought the sturgeon so excellent at dinner, let me take out the value of the sauce in lessons in chicanery."

"Very well," said Desroches. "Suppose that a man owes you money, and your creditors serve a writ of attachment upon him; there is nothing to prevent all your other creditors from doing the same thing. And now what does the court do when all the creditors make application for orders to pay? *The court divides the whole sum attached, proportionately among them all.* That division, made under the eye of a magistrate, is what we call a *contribution.* If you owe ten thousand francs, and your creditors issue writs of attachment on a debt due to you of a thousand francs, each one of them gets so much per cent., 'so much in the franc,' in legal phrase; so much (that means) in proportion to the amounts severally

claimed by the creditors. But—the creditors cannot touch the money without a special order from the clerk of the court. Do you guess what all this work drawn up by a judge and prepared by attorneys must mean? It means a quantity of stamped paper full of diffuse lines and blanks, the figures almost lost in vast spaces of completely ruled empty columns. The first proceeding is to deduct the costs. Now, as the costs are precisely the same whether the amount attached is one thousand or one million francs, it is not difficult to eat up three thousand francs (for instance) in costs, especially if you can manage to raise counter-applications."

"And an attorney always manages to do it," said Cardot. "How many a time one of you has come to me with, 'What is there to be got out of the case?'"

"It is particularly easy to manage it if the debtor eggs you on to run up costs till they eat up the amount. And, as a rule, the Count's creditors took nothing by that move, and were out of pocket in law and personal expenses. To get money out of so experienced a debtor as the Count, a creditor should really be in a position uncommonly difficult to reach; it is a question of being creditor and debtor both, for then you are legally entitled to work the confusion of rights, in law language——"

"To the confusion of the debtor?" asked Malaga, lending an attentive ear to this discourse.

"No, the confusion of rights of debtor and creditor, and pay yourself through your own hands. So Claparon's innocence in merely issuing writs of attachment eased the Count's mind. As he came back from the Variétés with Antonia, he was so much the more taken with the idea of selling the reading-room to pay off the last two thousand francs of the purchase-money, because he did not care to have his name made public as a partner in such a concern. So he adopted Antonia's plan. Antonia wished to reach the higher ranks of her calling, with splendid rooms, a maid, and a carriage;

in short, she wanted to rival our charming hostess, for instance——"

"She was not woman enough for that," cried the famous beauty of the circus; "still, she ruined young d'Esgrignon very neatly."

"Ten days afterward, little Croizeau, perched on his dignity, said almost exactly the same thing, for the fair Antonia's benefit," continued Desroches.

"'Child,' said he, 'your reading-room is a hole of a place. You will lose your complexion; the gas will ruin your eyesight. You ought to come out of it; and, look here, let us take advantage of an opportunity. I have found a young lady for you that asks no better than to buy your reading-room. She is a ruined woman with nothing before her but a plunge into the river; but she has four thousand francs in cash, and the best thing to do is to turn them to account, so as to feed and educate a couple of children. This is the place for her.'

"'Very well. It is kind of you, Daddy Croizeau,' said Antonia.

"'Oh, I shall be much kinder before I have done. Just imagine it, poor Monsieur Denisart has been worried into the jaundice! Yes, it has gone to the liver, as it usually does with susceptible old men. It is a pity he feels things so. I told him so myself; I said, "Be passionate, there is no harm in that, but as for taking things to heart—draw the line at that! It is the way to kill yourself." Really, I would not have expected him to take on so about it; a man that has sense enough and experience enough to keep away as he does while he digests his dinner——'

"'But what is the matter?' inquired Mademoiselle Chocardelle.

"'That little baggage with whom I dined has cleared out and left him! Yes. Gave him the slip without any warning but a letter, in which the spelling was all to seek.'

"'There, Daddy Croizeau, you see what comes of boring a woman——'

"'It is indeed a lesson, my pretty lady,' said the guileful Croizeau. 'Meanwhile, I have never seen a man in such a state. Our friend Denisart cannot tell his left hand from his right; he will not go back to look at the "scene of his happiness," as he calls it. He has so thoroughly lost his wits that he proposes that I should buy all Hortense's furniture (Hortense was her name) for four thousand francs.'

"'A pretty name,' said Antonia.

"'Yes. Napoleon's step-daughter was called Hortense. I built carriages for her as you know,' said the stricken ex-coach-maker.

"'Very well, I will see,' said cunning Antonia; 'begin by sending this young woman to me.'

"Antonia hurried off to see the furniture, and came back fascinated. She brought Maxime under the spell of antiquarian enthusiasm. That very evening the Count agreed to the sale of the reading-room. The establishment, you see, nominally belonged to Mademoiselle Chocardelle. Maxime burst out laughing at the idea of little Croizeau's finding him a buyer. The firm of Maxime and Chocardelle was losing two thousand francs, it is true, but what was the loss compared with four glorious thousand-franc notes in hand? 'Four thousand francs of live coin! there are moments in one's life when one would sign bills for eight thousand to get them,' as the Count said to me.

"Two days later the Count must see the furniture himself, and took the four thousand francs upon him. The sale had been arranged; thanks to little Croizeau's diligence, he pushed matters on; he had 'come round' the widow, as he expressed it. It was Maxime's intention to have all the furniture removed at once to a lodging in a new house in the Rue Tronchet, taken in the name of Madame Ida Bonamy; he did not trouble himself much about the nice old man that was

about to lose his thousand francs. But he had sent beforehand for several big furniture vans.

"Once again he was fascinated by the beautiful furniture which a wholesale dealer would have valued at six thousand francs. By the fireside sat the wretched owner, yellow with jaundice, his head tied up in a couple of printed handkerchiefs, and a cotton night-cap on the top of them; he was huddled up in wrappings like a chandelier, exhausted, unable to speak, and altogether so knocked to pieces that the Count was obliged to transact his business with the manservant. When he had paid down the four thousand francs, and the servant had taken the money to his master for a receipt, Maxime turned to tell the man to call up the vans to the door: but even as he spoke, a voice like a rattle sounded in his ears:

"'It is not worth while, Monsieur le Comte. You and I are quits; I have six hundred and thirty francs fifteen centimes to give you!'

"To his utter consternation, he saw Cérizet, emerged from his wrappings like a butterfly from the chrysalis, holding out the accursed bundle of documents.

"'When I was down on my luck I learned to act on the stage,' added Cérizet. 'I am as good as Bouffé at old men.'

"'I have fallen among thieves!' shouted Maxime.

"'No, Monsieur le Comte, you are in Mademoiselle Hortense's house. She is a friend of old Lord Dudley's; he keeps her hidden away here; but she has the bad taste to like your humble servant.'

"'If ever I longed to kill a man,' so the Count told me afterward, 'it was at that moment; but what could one do? Hortense showed her pretty face, one had to laugh. To keep my dignity, I flung her the six hundred francs. "There's for the girl," I said.'"

"That is Maxime all over!" cried La Palférine.

"More especially as it was little Croizeau's money," added Cardot the profound.

"Maxime scored a trump," continued Desroches, "for Hortense exclaimed, 'Oh! if I had only known that it was you.'"

"A pretty 'confusion' indeed!" put in Malaga. "You have lost, milord," she added, turning to the notary.

And in this way the cabinet-maker, to whom Malaga owed a hundred crowns, was paid.

PARIS, 1845.

MUSKINGUM COLLEGE LIBRARY
PQ2161 S3 1899 v.5 mustk
Balzac, Honoré de/The works of Honoré de
3 2152 0011 4 0859

CONFIDENTIAL

PQ2161 Balzac
S3
1899 The works of
v.5 Honoré de Balzac.